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INTRODUCTION.

SECTION I.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT OR ST JOHN'S EVE.

AMONG the Saxons the year was divided into two parts. It commenced with the so-called *moder* or *modre niht* (mother-night), *i.e.*, the night which gave birth to the year; and the second division began with the summer solstice or *mid-sumor niht*. All the Teutonic nations held the winter and the summer solstices as seasons of festivity and rejoicing. The former of these was called *Yule* (*Geol* or *Gehol*), joy-tide, and the latter was named *Lid*, or drink-feast time. These are the originals of our more modern Christmas-tide and Midsummer Night festivals. The day set apart, by the olden Church, for observance as that of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, has been for many centuries one of the most popular of the feast-days sanctioned by Christianity. It enjoys this acceptance with the people all the more because it coincides with Midsummer Day (24th June), and has inherited a number of the gladsome associations it had attracted to itself in heathen times. These are now, however, so curiously and closely interwoven with those which are the outcome of Christian faith and feeling, that it would not be easy to discriminate between them. Hence the fact was, as the Rev. Joseph Hunter remarked, that 'Midsummer Night was of old in England a time of bonfires and rejoicings, and in London of processions and pageantries. Looked back to, from our own days of incessant toil and intense application, such times of delight as our ancestors culled out from their everyday work, as holidays, appear to have been joyous, innocent, attractive.' 'On the vigiles of festivall dayes,' says the pleasant old topographer of London, John Stowe,

‘and on the same festivall dayes in the evenings, after the sunsetting, there were usually made bonfires in the streets, every man bestowing wood or labour towards them. The wealthier sort also before their dores, neere to the said bone-fires, would set out tables on the vigiles, furnished with sweet bread and good drink, and on the festivall dayes with meats and drinks plentifully, whereunto they would invite their neighbours, and passengers also, to sit and be merry with them in greate familiarity, praysing God for His benefites bestowed on them. These were called bonefires, as well of amity amongst neigboures, that being before at controversie, were there by the labour of others reconciled, and made of bitter enemies, loving friendes ; and also for the virtue that a greate fire hathe to purge the infection of the ayre.’* ‘On the vigil of St John’s Eve,’ he continues, ‘every man’s dore being shadowed with greene birch, long fennell, St John’s wort, orpine, white lilies, and such like, garnished upon with beautiful flowers, had also lampes of glasse, with oyle burning in them all the night ; some hung out branches of yron, curiously wrought, containing hundreds of lampes lighted at once, which made a goodly shew.’

The festivals of the saints were generally celebrated on the anniversary of their death, but to this an exception is made in the case of St John the Baptist, whose memorial day is held on that of his nativity, who came ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord’ (*Luke i, 17*) ; and concerning whom the angel Gabriel said, ‘Many shall rejoice at his birth’ (*Luke i, 14*). Another exceptional circumstance connected with the festival of St John was, that the observances by which it was celebrated commenced on the previous evening, called, as usual, the Eve of St John, or Midsummer Night. ‘Then,’ as Barnaby Googe sings, in his version of the Latin poem of Thomas Naogeorgius on *The Popish Kingdom*, in the fourth book of which there is an interesting description of the customs of the olden time on feasts and holidays :

‘Then doth the joyfull feast of John the Baptist take his turne,
When bonefires great, with lofty flame, in every towne doe burne ;
And young men round about, with maydes, doe dance in every streete,
With garlands wrought of mother-wort, or else of vervaine sweete,
And many other flowers faire, with violets in their hands ;
Whereas they all doe fondly thinke, that whosoever stands,

* *Survey of London*, edition 1618, p. 156.

And through the flowers beholds the flame, his eyes shall feele no paine.

When thus till night they dancèd have, they through the fire amaine
With striving mindes doe runne, and all their hearbes they cast
therin,

And then, with words devout and prayers, they solemnly begin
Desiring God that all their illes may there confounded bee;
Whereby they thinke, through all that year, from argues to be free.'*

As John the Baptist was 'a burning and a shining light,' there was something suggestive in these bonfires and lights. They were emblematical of the revealing power and character of the Forerunner. Around the fires, which the people had lighted in the public squares, it was the custom of the young to gather and dance with almost frantic mirth, leaping occasionally through and over the flames, not to show their agility, but in accordance with the custom of the festival that they should thus pass through the fire. Each on departing, too, snatched a flaming firebrand from the pile, and carried it away with him, blazing as it was, while the remainder of the *feu de joie* was scattered to the winds that it might disperse every evil, as its own ashes had been thoroughly scattered.

It was perhaps as a precaution against the accidents likely to result from the incautious use of these fires and flambeaux that it was customary in towns to keep a watch, which marched about through the streets during the whole of the Midsummer Night. Each member of this watch wore a garland of flowers upon his head, and sometimes to this was added knots of ribbon. The patrol were provided with burning torches or cressets, carried in barred pots at the top of long poles, which flung the wanton sheen of their resplendent fires along the pathways, and upon the merry-making rompers in the streets and squares, often amounting to hundreds. Sometimes the morris-dancers and the minstrels of the town accompanied the marching watch, and jokes and joviality, frolic and fun, abounded.

In the remote country districts the people were more accustomed to go out into the woods and make themselves masters of branches of trees, which they took home with them, and hung over or set up at their doors, amidst shouts of glee and merry jesting, believing them to be powerful to avert thunders, tempests, and noxious vapours. Sometimes, that the preaching might more nearly resemble that of the Baptist in the wilderness, they carried them to the church,

* Quoted in Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, p. 317.

where a sermon was delivered on St John's Day. Mingled with these public gaieties, there were some superstitious rites and practices. On that night some of the eleven native species of the mystic St John's wort (*Hypericum*) were gathered, as well as rue, vervain, and trefoil, all of which were regarded as on this eve, 'plants of power,' possessing more than their usual magical properties. Plants of orpine, under the designation of a midsummer man, were laid on a plate or a potsherd, and as this plant was turned in the morning to the right hand or to the left, it indicated the fidelity or the falsity of the lover of the maiden who employed this charm ; and various other fantastical means were employed to secure dreams regarding the objects of affection. One of the strangest of these whims of the superstitious, was the search for fern seed on Midsummer Eve. The fern is one of those herbs which have their seed on the back of the leaf, so small as only to be seen with difficulty. From this, with the curious irrelative reasoning of olden days, it was concluded that the possession of seeds not themselves easily seen would confer on their fortunate gatherer the power of being himself invisible. Thus a belief arose that fern seed only became visible on this one night, and that precisely at the moment of the birth of St John, that it was under the special care of the fairy queen, and that 'the one-night seeding fern' was an 'herb that gives invisibility.' So, young men went out at deep midnight on Midsummer Eve, to catch some seeds of the fern upon a plate, in the hope that they would be able to boast, 'We have the receipt of fern seed ; we walk invisible'—
1 *Henry IV*, II, i, 96. Another and more singular fancy of our forefathers was, that the souls of all people, unless they keep awake and watchful against the occurrence, leave their bodies on the Eve of St John's Nativity, and wander away, over land and sea it may be, to the place where death shall eventually overtake the body, and the spirit shall for ever quit its frail clay tabernacle ; and that if any person would sit fasting all night in the church porch, he would see the spirits of all those in the parish who were to die within the ensuing year approach and tap at the church door in the order in which they should pass away to their death-doom. This too was a high festival night with the fairies, who held their chief annual revel on the Eve of St John.

It is to the dream of such an eve, when joyful revelry, good nature, love feelings, mystic superstitions, and poetic fancies, were all excited in combined activity, that Shakespeare likens this play. It has all the wild wantonness, the

strange disconnected continuity, the causeless change of incident, the curious concurrence of contrarieties of a dream, intensified and made more wonderful as well beseems the visions of an eve so singular—in which human hearts and fairies' feet are alike active, and extra-human vitality surcharges the whole state of social enjoyment. Therefore this drama is well designated *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

SECTION II.

THESEUS AND HIPPOLYTA.

PART I.—CHAUCER'S 'KNIGHT'S TALE.'

'The [heroic] characters in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* are,' as the late Professor W. Spalding said, 'classical; but the costume is strictly Gothic, and shows that it was through the medium of Romance that Shakespeare drew his knowledge of them.* Probably the more immediate source of the classical framework of the play was, as the old commentators suggest, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The creator of the *Canterbury Pilgrims* had, among his early efforts, essayed to sing 'all the love of Palamon and Arcite of Thebes.' He had borrowed the matter of his story from the *Teseide* of Boccaccio—'a tedious brief' epic in *ottava rima*, which Chaucer in his antique sketch judiciously curtailed, and very materially improved. From this tale, which had become familiar in the chivalrous poetry of the Middle Ages, Shakespeare took the characters of Theseus and Hippolyta, and the idea of the festivities and solemnities at Athens, at their marriage, which forms the framework of this play. This the following extracts will show:

‘Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
There was a duke, that highté Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was there non under the sonne.
Full mani a riche countrie hadde he won;

* Letter on the Authorship of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1833), p. 67.

INTRODUCTION.

That with his wisdom and his chivalrie
 He conquered all the regne of Femynye,
 That whilom was ycleped Citheia [Scythia];
 And wedded the queen Ipolyta,
 And brought her hoom with him in his contré,
 With moche glorie and gret solempnitie [V, i, 376].

And certes, if it n'ere to [o] long to heere,
 I wolde have tolde you fully the manere
 How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
 By Theseus and by his chivalrie,
 And of the grete betaille for the nones
 Betwixte Athens and the Amazones;
 And how aseigid was Ypolita,
 The faire hardy quyen of Citheia,
 And of the feste that was at hire weddynge,
 And of the tempest at her hoom comyng;
 Bot all that thing I most as now forbere—1-27.

Mighty Theseus,
 That for to hunt is so desirous [V, i, 1-28],
 And namely the grete hert in May,
 That in his bed ther daw[n]eth him no day
 That he n'ys clade and redy for to ryde
 With hont and horn and houndes hym byside—
 For in his hontyng hath he such delyte,
 That it is al his joye and appetyt
 To been himself the grete hertes bane,
 For after Mars he serveth now Dyáne.

Clere was the day, as I have told or this,
 And Theseus, with alle joye and blys,
 With his Ypolita, the fayre queene,
 And Emelye, clothed al in greene,
 On hontyng be thay riden ryally;
 And to the grove that stood ther faste by,
 In which ther was a herte, as men him tolde,
 Duk Theseus the strete weye hath holde,
 And to the launde he rydeth him ful ryght.
 There was the herte y-wont to have his flight,
 And over a brook, and so, forth in his weye,
 This duk woulde have of hym a cours or tweye
 With houndes whiche, as him lust to commande—815-837.

Whan sette was Theseus riche and hye,
 Ypolita the queene, and Emelye,
 And other ladyes in here degrees aboue,
 Unto the seetes, preseth alle the route—1719-1722.

Duk Theseus and al his compayne
Is comen hom to Athenes, his cité,
With alle blys and gret solempnité'—1843-1845.

From the same poem, too, Shakespeare adopted the season of May as the time in which the incidents of the plot occurred.

'It fel ones in a morowe of May,
That Emelie, that fairer was to seene
Than is the lylie on hire stalkes grene,
And fresscher than the May with floures newe,
For with the rose colour strof hire hewe—
I not which was the fairer of hem two.
Ere it was day, as sche was wont to do,
Sche was arisen, and al redy dight,
For May wole have no soggardye a-nyght:
The seasoun priketh every gentel herte,
Aad maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
And seith, *Aryse, and do thin obseruance* [I, i, 167].
This maked Emelye hau remembrance
To do honour to May, and for to ryse
I-clothed was sche fressh for to devyse—176-190.

The busy larke, messenger of day,
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray;
And fyry Phoebus ryseth up so bright
That al the orient laugeth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver drops hangyng on the leaves.
And Arcite, that is in the court ryal
With Theseus his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the merry day,
And for to doon his obseruance to May—633-642.

Gret was the fest in Athenus that day,
And eek that lusty seasoun of that May [V, i, 375-377]
Made every wight to beir in such plesaunce
That al the Monday jousten they and daunce,
And spende hit in Venus' heigh servise—1625-1629.

This noble duk [Theseus] as he wel can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the lange night
Unto the strange lords, as it was right—1857-1860.

I will not telle eek how that they been goon
Hom til Athenes whan the play is doon'—2105, 2106.

Shakespeare, however, was neither a man of one book, nor of one idea; and though the *Knight's Tale* in all likelihood supplied him with the primary hint of who should be his classical hero and heroine, as there can be no reasonable doubt that the main elements of the characters of Theseus and the bouncing Amazon, Hippolyta, are due to North's translation of Amyot's *Plutarch* (1579), we shall lay before the reader such extracts from that interesting memoir as may show the nature and spirit of the influence caught from the old Greek biographer by the Elizabethan dramatist.

PART II.—NORTH'S 'LIFE OF THESEUS' (ABRIDGED).

'Having long debated with myself what Æschylus the poet said:

“What champion may with such a man compare?
Or who (thinks I) shall be against him set?
Who is so bold? or who is he that dare
Defend his force in such encounter met?”

In the end, I resolved to compare him which did set up the noble and famous city of Athens unto him which founded the glorious and invincible city of Rome, wherein I would have wished that the fables of her antiquity had been set out so in our writings, that we might yet have graced them with some appearance of historical narration. . . . Now, surely, methinks that Theseus in many things was much like unto Romulus. For being both begotten by stealth, and out of lawful matrimony, they were both bruited to be born of the seed of gods. “Both valiant were, as all the world doth know.” Both were very wise, and strong besides of body. The one of them built Rome, and the other the city of Athens, two of the most noble cities of the world. . . . Theseus, of his father's side, was descended of the right lineage of Erichtheus the Great, and of the first inhabitants which occupied the country of Attica, the which since were called Autochthones, as much as to say, as born of themselves. . . . And of his mother's side he came of Pelops, who was in his time the mightiest king of all the country of Peloponnesus; not so much for his goods and riches, as for the number of children which he had. . . . Pitheus, grandfather to Theseus on the mother's side, was one that founded the little city of Troezen, and was reputed to be one of the best learned and wisest men of his time. . . . Ægeus, desiring (as they say) to know how he might have

children, went into the city of Delphes, to the oracle of Apollo, where, by a nun of the temple, this notable prophecy was given him for an answer. . . .

“ O thou, which art a gem of perfect grace,
Pluck not the tap out of thy trusty tun :
Before thou do, return unto thy place
In Athens' town, from whence thy race doth run.”

‘ Pitheus, understanding the meaning, persuaded him, or rather cunningly by some device deceived him, in such sort, that he made him to consort with his daughter, called Æthra. Ægeus left her a sword and a pair of shoes, the which he hid under a great hollow stone, the hollowness whereof served just to receive those things which he laid under it, and made no living creature privy to it but her alone, straitly charging her, that if she happened to have a son, when he were come to man's estate, and of strength to remove the stone, and to take those things from under it which he left there: that she should then send him unto him by those tokens, as secretly as she could, that nobody else might know of it. . . . Æthra within few months after was delivered of a goodly son, the which from that time was called Theseus: and, as some say, so called because of the tokens of knowledge his father had laid under the stone. . . . During his infancy and childhood, he was brought up in the house of his grandfather Pitheus, under the government and teaching of one called Connidas, his schoolmaster. . . . Æthra kept it secret from him who was his true father. And Pitheus also had given it out abroad that he was begotten of Neptune, because the Troezenians have this god in great veneration, and do worship him as patron and protector of their city, making offerings to him of their first-fruits; and they have for the mark and stamp of their money the three-piked mace which is the sign of Neptune, called his trident. But after he was come to the prime and lustiness of his youth, and that with the strength of his body he showed a great courage, joined with a natural wisdom and staidness of wit, then his mother brought him to the place where this great hollow stone lay, and telling him truly the order of his birth and by whom he was begotten, made him to take his father's tokens of knowledge which he had hidden there, and gave him counsel to go by sea to Athens unto him. Theseus easily lift up the stone, and took his father's tokens from under it; howbeit, he answered plainly that he would not go by sea, notwithstanding that it was a great

deal the safer way, and that his mother and grandfather both had instantly entreated him, because the way by land from Troezen to Athens was very dangerous, all the ways being beset by robbers and murderers. . . . Now Hercules travelling abroad in the world drew away many of those wicked, thievish murderers; and some of them he slew and put to death. . . . The fame and glory of Hercules' noble deeds had long before secretly set his heart on fire, so that he made reckoning of none other but of him, and lovingly hearkened unto those which would seem to describe him what manner of man he was, but chiefly unto those which had seen him, and been in his company when he had said or done anything worthy of memory. . . . The wonderful admiration which Theseus had of Hercules' courage made him in the night that he never dreamed but of his noble acts and doings, and in the day-time pricked forwards with emulation and envy of his glory, he determined with himself one day to do the like; and the rather because they were near kinsmen, being cousins removed by the mother's side. For Æthra was the daughter of Pitheus, and Alcmena, the mother of Hercules, was the daughter of Lysidices, the which was half-sister to Pitheus, both children of Pelops and of his wife Hippodamia. . . . The first, therefore, whom Theseus slew within the territories of the city of Epidaurum, was a robber called Periphetes. This robber used, for his ordinary weapon, to carry a club, and for that cause he was commonly surnamed Corynetes, that is to say, a club-carrier. . . . In the Straits of Peloponnesus he killed another, called Sinnis, surnamed Pityocamtes, that is to say, a wreather or bower of pine-apple trees. . . . This Sinnis had a goodly, fair daughter called Perigouna, which fled away when she saw her father slain, whom he followed and sought all about. . . . But Theseus finding her, called her, and sware by his faith he would use her gently, and do her no hurt nor displeasure. . . . She was conceived of a goodly boy, which was called Menalippus. . . . He slew also Cercyon the Arcadian, in the city of Eleusin, wrestling with him. And going a little farther, he slew Damastes, otherwise surnamed Procrustes, in the city of Hermione, and that by stretching of him out to make him even with the length and measure of his beds, as he was wont to do unto strangers that passed by. Theseus did that after the imitation of Hercules, who punished tyrants with the self-same pain and torment which they had made others suffer. . . . It is supposed he arrived in the city of

Athens the eighth day of the month of June, which then they called Cronius. He found the commonwealth turmoiled with seditions, factions, and divisions, and particularly the house of Ægeus in very ill terms also, because that Medea (being banished out of the city of Corinth) was come to dwell in Athens, and remained with Ægeus, whom she had promised by virtue of certain medicines to make him to get children. But when she heard tell that Theseus was come, before that the good King Ægeus—who was now become old, suspicious, and afraid of sedition, by reason of the great factions within the city at that time—knew what he was, she persuaded him to poison him at a feast which they would make him as a stranger that passed by. Theseus failed not to go to this prepared feast whereunto he was bidden, but yet thought it not good to disclose himself. And the rather to give Ægeus occasion and means to know him, when they brought the meat to the board, he drew out his sword as though he would have cut withal, and showed it unto him. Ægeus, seeing it, knew it straight, and forthwith overthrew the cup with poison which was prepared for him; and after he had inquired of him, and asked things, he embraced him as his son. Afterwards in the common assembly of the inhabitants of the city, he declared how he avowed him for his son. Then all the people received him with exceeding joy, for the renown of his valianthood and manhood. . . . This done, Theseus, who would not live idly at home and do nothing, but desirous wherewithal to gratify the people, went his way to fight with the bull of Marathon, the which did great mischiefs to the inhabitants of the country of Tetrapolis. And having taken him alive, brought him through the city of Athens, to be seen of all the inhabitants. Afterwards he did sacrifice him unto Apollo Delphias. . . . After he was arrived in Creta, he slew there the Minotaure (as the most part of ancient authors do write) by the means and help of Ariadne, who, being fallen in fancy with him, did give him a clue of thread, by the help whereof she taught him how he might easily wind out of the turnings and cranks of the Labyrinth. And they say, that, having killed this Minotaure, he returned back again the same way he went, bringing with him those other young children of Athens, whom, with Ariadne also, he carried afterwards away. . . . Theseus made league with her, and carried away the young children of Athens, which were kept as hostages, and concluded peace and amity between the Athenians and the Cretans, who promised and swore they would never make wars against them.

. . . Some say that Ariadne hung herself for sorrow when she saw that Theseus had cast her off. Others write that she was transported by mariners into the isle of Naxos, where she was married unto Cenarus, the priest of Bacchus, and they think that Theseus left her because he was in love with another, as by these verses should appear:

“ *Ægles the nymph was loved of Theseus,
Who was the daughter of Panopeus.* ”

. . . Furthermore, after the death of his father Ægeus, he undertook a marvellous great enterprise, for he brought all the inhabitants of the whole province of Attica to be within the city of Athens, and made them all one corporation which were before dispersed into divers villages, and by reason thereof were very hard to be assembled together when occasion was offered to establish any order concerning the common state. . . . That done, he gave over his regal power, according to his promise, and began to set up an estate or policy of a commonwealth, beginning first with the service of the gods. . . . Now that Theseus was the first who, of all others, yielded to have a commonweal or popular estate (as Aristotle saith), and did give over his regal power: Homer's self seemeth to testify it, in numbering the ships which were in the Grecians' army before the city of Troy. For amongst all the Grecians, he only calleth the Athenians people. Moreover, Theseus coined money, which he marked with the stamp of an ox, in memory of the bull of Marathon, or of Taurus, the captain of Minos, or else to provoke his citizens to give themselves to labour. . . . Touching the voyage he made by the sea, Major, Philochorus, and some others, hold opinion that he went thither with Hercules against the Amazons, and that, to honour his valianthood, Hercules gave him Antiopa the Amazon. But the more part of the other historiographers, namely Hellanicus, Pherecides, and Herodotus, do write that Theseus went thither alone after Hercules' voyage, and that he took this Amazon prisoner, which is likeliest to be true. . . . Bion also, the historiographer, this notwithstanding, saith, . . . Theseus enticed her to come into his ship, who brought him a present, and as soon as she was aboard, he hoisted his sail, and so carried her away. Another historiographer, Menecrates, who wrote the history of the city of Nicea in the country of Bithynia, saith that Theseus, having this Amazon Antiopa with him, remained a certain time upon those coasts, and that, amongst others, he had in his company three

younger brethren of Athens, Euneus, Thoas, and Solois. . . . The Amazons had not placed their camp within the very city of Athens, nor had not fought in the very place itself (called Pnyce) adjoining to the temple of the Muses, if they had not first conquered or subdued all the country thereabouts; neither had they all come at the first so valiantly to assail the city of Athens. . . . Theseus, having first made sacrifice unto Fear, the goddess, according to the counsel of a prophecy he had received, he gave them battle in the month of August. . . . The Athenians were repulsed by the Amazons, even to the place where the images of Eumenides are, that is to say, of the furies. But on the other side also, the Athenians, coming towards the quarters of Palladium, Ardetus, and Lucium, drove back their right point even to within their camp, and slew a great number of them. Afterwards, at the end of four months, peace was taken between them by means of one of the women called Hyppolita. For this historiographer [Clidemus] calleth the Amazon which Theseus married, Hyppolita, and not Antiopa. Nevertheless, some say that she was slain (fighting on Theseus's side) with a dart, by another called Molpadia. . . . Yet we find many other reports touching the marriages of Theseus, whose beginnings had no great good honest ground, neither fell out their ends very fortunate; and yet for all that, they have made no tragedies of them, neither have they been played in the theatres. For we read that he took away Anaxo, the Troezenian, and that after he had killed Sinnis and Cercyon, he took their daughters perforce; and that he did also marry Peribæa, the mother of Ajax, and afterwards Pherebæa, and Joppa, the daughter of Iphicles. And they blame him much also for that he so lightly forsook his wife Ariadne for the love of Ægles, the daughter of Panopæus, as we have recited before. Lastly, he took away Helen; which ravishment filled all the realm of Attica with wars, and finally was the very occasion that forced him to forsake his country, and brought him at the length to his end. . . . Theseus, while he lived, was protector of the oppressed, and did courteously receive their requests and petitions that prayed to have aid of him. The greatest and most solemn sacrifice they do unto him is on the eighth day of October, in which he returned from Crete, with the other young children of Athens.'

SECTION III.

PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

Karl Simrock in his *Remarks on the Plots of Shakespeare's Plays* (Halliwell's edition, 1850) has said, 'In our opinion, the same features may be recognised in the three most noted love-tales of all times—those of Hero and Leander, Pyramus and Thisbe, among the ancients, and that of Tristaran and Isolde among the moderns; and we consider them, in all essential points, identical with the story of Romeo and Juliet' (p. 8); and, curiously enough, he points out that 'with the ancients a moral obstacle is invariably concealed by the material one represented' (p. 10), giving reality to the pun employed by Shakespeare in this very play: 'Now is the *mural* down between the two neighbours'—V, i.

This antique Roman love-tale, which is the type of so many stories on the power of love to conquer 'all obstacles, and break through all restraint of custom to reach that object which alone is of any value in its eyes,' and gives such evidence that 'the course of true love never did run smooth' (I, i, 134), has attained a wonderful popularity. It is told, with his usual graphic felicity, by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (iv, 55-166). It was introduced into English literature—modified in some degree by its passage through the mind of Boccaccio, who reproduced it in his *De Claris Mulieribus*—in the *Legend of Good Women*, by Geoffrey Chaucer. With this poem Shakespeare was certainly acquainted, as we know from the allusions drawn from it in the *Merchant of Venice*, V, i. Though it is likely Shakespeare had read the tale in the original,* he may have consulted and read Arthur Golding's

* Shakespeare was pretty well acquainted, somehow or other, with the contents of the writings of that master of 'the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy'—Ovidius Naso (*Love's Labour's Lost*, IV, ii, 107). A copy of the *Ovidii Metamorphoseon Libri Quindecim*, printed by Aldus, at Venice, in October 1502, was acquired for the Bodleian Library, January 1865, which presents what appears to be a genuine Shakespeare autograph. On the title of this octavo there is the signature 'WM. SHR.' in a hand not unlike that of the signatures attached to Shakespeare's will; and opposite to the title on a leaf pasted down on the original binding of the book is a note, most certainly a genuine memorandum of the date to which it professedly belongs—a period long anterior to the Ireland forgery time—which runs thus: 'This little booke of Ovid

translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of which the first four books were issued in 1565, and the entire fifteen in 1596. We quote the entire tale as given in Golding's earliest version, as the most probable and patent source of the poet's interlude.

' Within the towne (of whose huge walles so monstrous high and thicke,

The fame is given Semiramis for making them of bricke)

Dwelt hard together two young folke, in houses joynde so nere

That under all one roofe well nie both twaine convayed were.

The name of him was Pyramus, and Thisbe called was she;

So faire a man in all the East was none alive as he,

Nor nere a woman, mayde, nor wife, in beautie like to her.

This neigh-brod bred acquaintance first, this neigh-brod first did ster

The secret sparkes: this neigh-brod first an entrance in did show
For love, to come to that to which it afterward did grow.

And if that right had taken place they had beene man and wife;

But still their parents went about to let which (for their life)

They could not let. For both their hearts with equal flame did
burne:

No man was privie to their thoughts. And for to serve their
turne,

Instead of talke they used signes: the closlier they supprest
The fire of love, the fiercer still it raged in their brest.

The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a cranie,
Which shroonke at making of the wall [V, i, 156-159]: this fault,
not markt of anie

Of many hundred yeeres before (what doth not love espie?),
These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby

To talke together secretly, and through the same did go

Their loving whisprings very light and safely to and fro.

Now, as at one side Pyramus, and Thisbe on the other,
Stood often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other:

O thou envious wall (they sayed), why letst thou lovers thus:

What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us

In armes each other to embrace; or if thou think that this

Were over-much, yet mightest thou at least make roome to kisse.

And yet thou shalt not finde us churles; we think ourselves in det
For the same piece of curtesie, in vouching safe to let

was given to me by W. Hall, who sayd it was once Will Shakespeare's—T. N., 1682.' A William Hall, glover, lived in Henley Street in 1660, and T. N. might well be one of the family of Nash, into which Elizabeth Hall, Shakespeare's grand-daughter, married. In the *Cornhill Magazine*, October 1867, it is spoken of as a relic of Shakespeare, 'which there is little doubt is genuine'—p. 469.

Our sayings to our friendly eares thus freely come and go.
 Thus having where they stood in vaine complained of their wo,
 When night drew neare they bad adue, and ech gave kisses sweete
 Unto the parget on their side, the which did never meete.
 Next morning with her cheerefull light had driven the starres aside,
 And Phoebus with his burning beames the dewie grasse had dride,
 These lovers at their wonted place by fore-appointment met,
 Where, after much complaint and mone, they covenanted to get
 Away from such as watched them, and in the evening late
 To steale out of their father's house, and eke the citie gate.
 And to th' intent that in the fields they strayed not up and downe,
 They did agree at Ninus' Tomb to meet without the towne [I, i, 163-6]
 And tary underneath a tree that by the same did grow:
 Which was a faire high mulberie with fruite as white as snow,
 Hard by a coole and trickling spring. This bargaine pleased
 them both [V, i, 135-137].

And so day-light (which, to their thought, away but slowly goeth)
 Did in the ocean fall to rest, and night from thence did rise.
 As soone as darkenesse once was come, straight Thisbe did devise
 A shift to winde her out of doores, that none that were within
 Perceived her; and muffling her with clothes about her chin,
 That no man might discerne her face, to Ninus' Tombe she came
 Unto the tree; and set her downe there underneath the same.
 Love made her bold. But see the chance: there comes, besmerde
 with blood

About the chappes, a lyonesse all foming from the wood,
 From slaughter lately made of kine, to staunch her bloody thirst
 With water of the foresaid spring. Whom Thisbe spying first,
 Afarre by moone-light, thereupon with fearfull steps gan flie,
 And in a darke and yokesome cave did hide herselfe thereby.
 And as she fled away for haste, she let her mantle fall,
 The which for feare she left behinde, not looking backe at all.
 Now when the cruell lyonesse her thirst had staunched well,
 In going to the wood she found the slender weede that fell
 From Thisbe, which with bloodie teeth in peeces she did teare:
 The night was somewhat further spent ere Pyramus came there,
 Who seeing in the subtle sand the print of lyon's paw [V, i, 138-147],
 Waxt pale for feare. But when also the bloodie cloke he saw
 All rent and torn: one night (he sayed) shall lovers two confound,
 Of which long life deserved she of all that live on ground;
 My soule deserves of this mischaunce the perill for to beare.
 I, wretch, have been the death of thee, which to this place of
 feare

Did cause thee in the night to come, and came not there before.
 My wicked lims and wretched guts, with cruell teeth, therefore,
 Devoure ye, O ye lyons all that in this rocke doe dwell.
 But cowards use to wish for death. The slender weede that fell
 From Thisbe up he takes, and straight doth beare it to the tree,
 Which was appointed erst the place of meeting for to bee.

And when he had bewept, and kist the garment which he knew,
 Receive thou my blood too (quoth he); and therewithal he drew
 His sword, the which among his guts he thrust, and by and bie
 Did draw it from the bleeding wound, beginning for to die,
 And cast himselfe upon his backe; the blood did spinne on hie,
 As when a conduit pipe is crackt, the water bursting out
 Doth shote it selfe a great way off, and pierce the ayre about.
 The leaves that were upon the tree besprinkled with his blood,
 Were died black. The roote, also bestained as it stood,
 A deepe, dark purple colour straight upon the berries cast.
 Anon, scarce ridded of her feare with which she was agast
 For doubt of disapoynting him, comes Thisbe forth in hast,
 And for her lover lookes about, rejoicing for to tell
 How hardly she had 'scapt that night the danger that befell.
 And as she knew right well the place and facion of the tree
 (As which she saw so late before): even so when she did see
 The colour of the berries turn'd, she was uncertaine whither
 It were the tree at which they both agreed to meet togither.
 • While in this doubt full stound she stood, she cast her eye aside,
 And there beweltred in his blood hir lover she espide,
 Lie sprawling with his dying lims; at which she started backe,
 And looked pale as any box, a shuddring through her stracke,
 Even like the sea, which suddenly with whissing noyse doth move,
 When with a little blast of wind it is but toucht above.
 But when, approching nearer him, she knew it was her love,
 She beate her brest, she shrieked out, she tare her golden heares,
 And taking him betweene her arms, did wash his woundes with
 teares.
 She meynd her weeping with his blood, and kissing all his face
 (Which now became as cold as yse), she cryde in wofull case,
 Alas, what chaunce, my Pyramus, hath parted thee and mee?
 Make answere, O my Pyramus: it is thy Thisbe, even shee
 Whom thou doost love most hartily, that speaketh unto thee;
 Give eare and raise thy heavie head. He hearing Thisbe's name,
 Lift up his dying eyes, and having seene her, closd the same.
 But when she knew her mantle there, and saw his scaberd lie
 Without the sworde: Unhappy man, thy love hath made thee die.
 Thy love (she said) hath made thee slea thyselfe. This hand of mine
 Is strong inough to doe the like. My love, no lesse than thine,
 Shall give me force to worke my wound; I will pursue thee dead,
 And, wretched woman as I am, it shall of me be sed,
 That like as of thy death I was the onely cause and blame,
 So am I thy companion eke and partner in the same.
 For death which onely could, alas, asunder part us twaine,
 Shall never so dissever us but we will meeete againe.
 And you, the parents of us both, most wretched folke alive,
 Let this request that I shall make in both our names belive,
 Intreat you to permit, that we whom chaste and stedfast love,
 And whom evn death hath joyned in one, may as it doth behove

In one grave be together layd. And thou, unhappy tree,
 Which shroudest now the corse of one, and shalt anon through mee
 Shroude two, of this same slaughter hold the sicker sinnes for ay,
 Blacke be the colour of thy fruite, and mourning like alway,
 Such as the murder of us twaine may evermore bewray.
 This said, she tooke the sword yet warm with slaughter of her love,
 And setting it beneath her brest, did to the heart it shove.
 Her prayer with the gods and with their parents tooke effect,
 For when the fruite is thoroughly ripe, the berrie is bespect
 With colour tending to a blacke. And that which after fire
 Remained, rested in one tombe, as Thisbe did desire.'

The Ovidian romance was highly popular in Shakespeare's youth, and was a stock allusion in the love-poetry of the time. Shakespeare mentions it in the *Merchant of Venice*:

‘In such a night
 Did Thisbe fearfully o'erstep the dew;
 And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
 And ran dismayed away’—V, i, 6-9.

In ‘A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions, Garnished and Deckt with Divers Dayntie Devises, right delicate and delightful to recreate eche modest minde withall. First framed and fashioned in sundrie formes, by divers worthie workemen of late dayes: and now ioyned together and builded up by T[homas] P[roctor]. Imprinted at London for Richard Jones, 1578,’ reprinted by Thomas Park, in *Heli-conia*, part i, 1814, there appears, without any token of authorship, the largest, and in several respects the best poem in the volume—the *History of Pyramus and Thisbie*, ‘truely translated,’ which occupies pp. 153-176 of Park’s handsome quarto. This poem, which was licensed in the Registers of the Stationers’ Company to Richard Jones in 1577, was probably, like many other pieces in the *Gallery*, separately printed; and is not improbably from the pen of Thomas Proctor, or that of his father, John Proctor, master of Tunbridge School. It is said to be ‘truely translated,’ but from what original is not stated. It is certainly not versified from Ovid, if ‘truely’ is intended to have its usual meaning; for in Ovid the tale of the loves of Pyramus and Thisbie extends only to 110 lines (*Metamorphoses*, iv, 55-166), and the translation in Arthur Golding’s English version (1567) is accomplished in 135 lines (fol. 43^b to fol. 45^a, edition 1603), while this extends to 466 lines. Park suggests that it is from some Italian original, but gives no clue to the author from

whom he supposes this form of the story to be taken. Its variety of stanza and semi-dramatic form, as well as its wide deviations from Ovid, make this suggestion probable. The publication of the poem, however, in two immediately succeeding years, indicates the popularity of the story, and perhaps the appreciation of the poem by the readers of that day.

A new sonnet of *Pyramus and Thisbie*, signed J. Tomson, also appeared in 'A Handfull of Pleasant Delites; containing sundrie new sonets and delectable histories in divers kinds of meeter. Newly devised to the newest tunes that are now in use to be sung: every sonet orderly pointed to his proper tune. With new additions of certain songs, to verie late devised notes, not commonly knownen, nor used heretofore, by Clement Robinson; and divers others. At London, printed by Richard Jhones, dwellinge at the signe of the Rose and Crowne, neare Holburne Bridge, 1584.' One printed copy only of this work was extant, in the Marquis of Blandford's library, and from this unique edition a reprint was made in 1814, by Thomas Park in *Heliconia*, part ii. It is set to the tune of *Downe Right Squier*, and it is not improbable Shakespeare had it in his thoughts while he wrote this play.

'You dames (I say) that climbe the mount of Helicon,
Come on with me and give account what hath beene don;
Come tell the chance, ye muses all, and doleful newes,
Which on these lovers did befall, which I accuse.
In Babilon, not long agone, a noble prince did dwell,
Whose daughter bright dimd eche one's sight, so farre she did
excel.'

Another lord of high renowne, who had a sonne;
And dwelling there, withine the towne, great love begune;
Pyramus, this noble knight (I tel you true),
Who with the love of Thisbie bright, did cares renue.
It came to passe, their secrete was beknowne unto them both;
And then, in minde, they place do finde, where they their love
unclothe.

This love they use long tract of time, till it befell
At last they promised to meet at prime by Ninus' well;
Where they might lovingly embrace in love's delight;
That he might see his Thisbie's face, and she his sight.
In ioyful case, she approcht the place, where she her Pyramus
Had thought to viewd; but was renewed in them most dolorous.
Thus while she stares for Pyramus, there did proceed
Out of the wood a lion fierce, made Thisbie dreed;
And, as in haste she fled awaie, her mantle fine
The lion tare instead of prae; till that the time,

That Pyramus proceeded thus, and see how lion tare
 The mantle this of Thisbie his, he desperately doth fare,
 For why? he thought the lion had faire Thisbie slaine;
 And then the beast, with his bright blade he slew certainte.
 Then made he mone, and said, Alas, O wretched wight!
 Now art thou in a woeful case for Thisbie bright;
 O gods above, my faithful love shal never faile this need;
 For this my breath, by fatal death, shal weave Atropos' threed.
 Then from his sheathe he drew his blade, and to his heart
 He thrust the pointe, and life did vade, with painfull smart:
 Then Thisbie she from cabin came, with pleasure great;
 And to the well apase she runne, there for to treat,
 And to discusse to Pyramus, of al her former feares:
 And when slaine she found him, truly she shed foorth bitter
 teares.

When sorrow great that she had made, she tooke in hand
 The bloudie knife, to ende her life by fatal hand.
 You ladies all, peruse and see the faithfulness
 How these two lovers did agree to die in distresse,
 You muses, waile, and do not faile, but still do your lament,
 These lovers twaine, who with such paine did die so well con-
 tent.'

In an English translation of a French poem entitled *La Conusance d'Amours*, imprinted by Richard Pynson, a quarto of sixteen pages, the young lady to whom the poet is attached relates to him this old-world tale of the power of love. In an early copy of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* (1553), Mr Collier states that a woodcut representing the deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe is given; and the same print is found on the title-page of Geoffrey Fenton's *Monophyllo* (1572). In Warton's *History of English Poetry* (vol. iv, p. 243), it is stated that the *Boke of Perymus and Thisbye*, probably a translation of Ovid's fable, was licensed in 1562. In 1596 Dunston Gale produced a version, which was republished in 1617 and 1626; and in 1599, the tale is ingeniously interwoven as an episode in a poem entitled *The Silkwormes and their Flies*, lively described in verse by Dr Thomas Muffet. One of the early exercises in composition by Abraham Cowley, at ten years of age, is a reproduction in verse of Ovid's *Tragical History of Piramus and Thisbe*, published in his fifteenth year in his *Poetical Blossoms* (1635). A company of English comedians, in March 1659, performed *The Farce of Pyramus and Thisbe* at Dresden.

SECTION IV.

FAIRY MYTHOLOGY.

'The word *fairy* is derived through Italian and French from the Latin *Fata*, the fates or goddesses of destiny—Clotho, who spins the thread of life; Atropos, who cuts it; and Lachesis, or Fortune, who disposes of human lots. These awful personages bear but little resemblance to Oberon and Titania with their jocund train, which is not really surprising; for the fairies of rustic England, though bearing a classic name, are the direct descendants of the elves of Teutonic and Scandinavian mythology—a race of beings inhabiting the woods and meadows, of diminutive stature, but of formidable powers, sometimes hostile and sometimes friendly to man. This belief was brought over to our island by the Saxon and Danish invaders as a part of their religion, and continued after their conversion to flourish as a popular tradition, side by side with the creed of Christendom, unreconciled and uncontradicted.* In subsequent times the prevalent views of fairy-life became somewhat modified by the mythology of the classics. 'They were deemed intermediate between mankind and spirits; but still, as they partook of a decidedly spiritual nature, they were like all other spirits, under the influence of the devil; but their actions were more mischievous than demoniacal, more perplexing than malicious, more frolicsome than seriously injurious. Possessing material bodies, they had all the wants and passions of human nature; being spiritual, they had the power of making themselves invisible, and of passing through the smallest aperture.' †

Shakespeare found the suggestive elements of his fairy-land and its inhabitants in the folk-lore of the cottage fire-sides of Warwickshire, in popular legends and often-sung ditties, in traditions living in the hearts of the people whom he knew. His neighbours and friends—and not improbably himself too—had faith in fairies, their pranks and their gambols. Of course he was acquainted with and used the *Wyf of Bath's Tale*, in which Chaucer supplies testimony that—

* *Westminster Review*, No. 184, October 1877, 'The Supernatural Element in Shakespeare,' p. 376.

† Augustine Skottowe's *Life of Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 258.

' In olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,
 Of which that Britons spoken gret honour,
Al was this land fulfilled of fayrie;
 The elf-queen with her jolie compaignye,
 Daunc'd ful oft in many a grene mede.
 This was the old oppynyoun, as I rede;
 I speke of many hundred yere ago;
 But now can no man see noon elves mo.
 For now the grete charité and prayeres
 Of lymytours and other holy freres,
 That seeken every land and every streme
 As thik as motis in the sonne-beem,
 Blessyng halles, chambres, kitchens, and bowres,
 Cities, burghes, castels hihe, and toures,
 Thorpes, bernes, shepnes, and dayeries,
 That makith that their be no fayeries'—I. 16.

But Shakespeare refined and etherealised the rural popular ideal of the fairy; and while he kept the 'good people' of the legends and lays of common life in harmony with the current belief of his day, he spiritualised the airy beings of the rustic's fancy into forms of power, of fadeless beauty, and of singular grace. He did not, like Spenser, make them only allegories and personifications, but he gave them reality of (imaginary) being, and bestowed upon them plenary capacities and activities in the influencing of life, eventfulness and change. Shakespeare's fairies are impersonations of influence. They are the rulers of the causations of small changes and slight chances. 'To them are assigned all natural oddities and whimsicalities, plants, flowers, and stones that have an air of tiny mimicry; nightmares, cramps, and dreams are under their control, and they bring about and delight in equally the pretty and the preposterous. Still the power they possess has more serious effects; the limitation of their mental scope implies no very robust moral control, hence their testiness and occasional ill-humour, their offence-taking and quarrelsomeness; and though rather in pet than in anger, by capricious indifference than by wanton malice, they cause trouble, vexation, and disfigurements—nay, when they are in height of moodiness, he who speaks to them dies. They are in fact wild agencies under a constitution of the world not very exactly regulated, whom a maid may desire to be well with, to conciliate if it may be, and at any rate not to offend. They are a mythological undergrowth.'*

* W. W. Lloyd's *Essays on Shakespeare*, printed for private circulation, 1858.

'Of all spirits, it was peculiar to the fairies to be actuated by the feelings and passions of mankind,' yet it was a mark of their comparative purity that they delighted most to celebrate their sports under 'the spangled starlight sheen,' or beneath the mild beams of the clear effulgent moon. Their superiority, too, to the demoniac tribes of gnomes, ghosts, etc., is seen in the peculiar privilege they enjoyed of prolonging their revels till the brilliancy of the day-dawn broke upon them. Shakespeare's fairies have less of romance about them than Spenser's. They have that touch of classicity which Chaucer gave them in the *Merchant's Tale* (in which, by the by, Ovid's story of Pyramus and Thisbe is referred to, 881-887), where he tells us :

' Bright was the day, and blew the firmament,
Phebus of gold his stremés down hath sent
To gladden every flower with his warmese,
He was, that time, in Geminis as I guess—905-908.

And so besell in that brighte morrowe tide
That in the gardin, on the further side,
Pluto, that is the king of Faerie,
And many a ladie in his compagnie
Following his wyf, the Queen Proserpine—981-985.

This king of Faerie adown him sette
Upon a banch of turves fresche and grene,
And right soon this said he to his queene —990-992.

[Hereupon follows a record of the quarrel between the king and queen of Faerie, which is perhaps the original suggestion of the scene in which Oberon and Titania 'square ;' and then these lines follow :]

' Dame, quoth this Pluto, be no longer wroth ;
I geve it up ; but sin I swore min oath,
That I will granten him his sight again,
My word shall stand, that warn I you certain :
I am a king, it sit me not to lie.
And I, quoth she, am queen of Faerie,
Her answere she shal had, I undertake :
Let us no more wordes of it make.
Forsooth, quoth he, I will not you contrary'—1067-1075.

In Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit*—entered on the Stationers' Registers 20th September 1592—the player (Shakespeare) says to Roberto (Greene): 'I am as famous for *Delphrigus* and the *King of Fairies* as any in my time.' As Oberon is a

character in Robert Greene's *James IV*, Malone was led to credit him with priority to Shakespeare in the conception of such a character. In this we think he is mistaken. Oberon is part and parcel of the plot of Shakespeare's play, and indispensable to it. In Greene's drama he is only an interlusive player, and may even be a mere editorial addition; for we know that great freedoms were taken with Greene's plays after his death. In short, it requires but a casual perusal, in our opinion, to see that the Oberon scenes with which Greene's *James IV* is 'entermixt,' are not the result of a new conception, but an adaptation of an already popular ideal, and that his 'Oberon,' who

' Is king
Of quiet, pleasure, profit, and content,
Of wealth, of honour, and of all the world,
Tied to no place, but all are tied to me,'

is a clumsy imitation of the featly Oberon of this play. Shakespeare, we cannot help believing, not only created the delicate, dainty fairies of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* from the raw material of tradition and ballad, but etherealised them with his own spirit, and taught all subsequent singers—Jonson, Drayton, Milton, Fletcher, Brown, Herrick, Corbet, Collins, Wieland, Sotheby, etc. He gave the pure lucidity of life to them, and ever since Shakespeare's fairies have been the parents of that sweet, amiable, flower-haunting race, of whom poets love to sing, and whom imagination delights to paint.*

SECTION V.

ON THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF THE 'MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.'

In endeavouring to determine the date of the composition of early dramatic works there are two circumstances which are very often disregarded by literary investigators, although they are, in a critical point of view, of great importance.

* Further information on this subject will be found in *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare*, by J. O. Halliwell; Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*; and *Fairy Tales, etc., Illustrating Shakespeare*, by W. C. Hazlitt. See also below in notes on *dramatis personae*, 'Fairy Characters,' p. 46.

The first has been concisely expressed by the Rev. N. J. Halpin in this sentence: ‘Many plays had possession of the stage for years before they were committed to the press, and of some, most probably the editions we possess were preceded by others, of which not a single copy has reached our times. The true time of the composition of any play, then, or the relative dates of any two [or more] must be derived from other sources than the date of publication’—such as (1) internal evidences; (2) allusions or references to, quotations from, or imitations of other plays; (3) both combined. The second may be perhaps placed plainly before the reader, by observing that in the earlier periods of the drama, and before plays were stereotyped by the press, the author and the theatrical managers had not only power and opportunity, but inducement to alter and amend their plays, to adapt them to passing interests, or make them more popular in representation. The printed copies on which we found our judgments may have undergone very considerable alterations between the period of their first production as acted plays and their first publication as printed dramas. So that allusions which we may regard as conclusive evidence of date may have been introductions on revision, and may even be insertions by different pens. Of all these processes we have well-known examples in our early plays.

The late Rev. N. J. Halpin, in *Oberon's Vision in the Midsummer Night's Dream Illustrated* (1843), maintained that the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, though a very early production, was not written till after Leicester's death. . . . Leicester died in 1588, and, as Shakespeare was then in his twenty-fourth year, we may assign any date between that and 1598 (when Meres mentions it as existing) for the composition of a drama which bears in every line the impress of a youthful imagination’—pp. 86, 87.

Karl Elze in his *Essays on Shakespeare*—translated by L. Dora Schmitz, 1874—advances the hypothesis that from whatever side we may view the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and whatever points we may take into consideration, everything agrees with the supposition that it was written in the spring of the year 1590, for the wedding of the Earl of Essex with Lady Sidney (p. 61); and the late Herman Kurz, in the German *Shakespeare Society's Year-Book* (vol. iv), agreed with him in thinking that ‘it was first performed at an entertainment given at the celebration of Essex's marriage, in conjunction with the May-day festival of 1590.’ In a paper on Shakespeare's poetical development, and the succession of

his plays, in the *Shakespeare Society's Year-Book*, vol. x., Herr W. Konig, resting less on style and versification than his predecessors, and relying more on the idea of the play and its poetical and dramatic treatment, arrives also at a conclusion in favour of 1590.

Mr F. J. Furnivall thinks ‘it is likely that the *Dream* was written for a performance in honour of some May-day marriage,’ and inclines to date its production to the year 1590-91. In this drama he finds ‘Shakespeare’s genius in the full glow of fancy and delightful fun. . . . It is a poem, a dream rather than a play: its freakish fancy of fairyland fitting it for the choicest possible chamber of the student’s brain, while its second part, the broadest farce, is just the thing for the public stage;’ and he points attention to the following relations between this and Shakespeare’s other early plays. ‘The links with the [*Comedy of Errors*] * are that all the wood-scenes are a comedy of errors with three sets of people, as in the *Errors* (and four in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*). There we have the vixen Hermia to match the shrewish Adriana; the quarrel with husband and wife, and Titania’s “these are the forgeries of jealousy,” to compare with Adriana’s jealousy in the *Errors*. Adriana offers herself to Antipholus of Syracuse, but he refuses her for her sister Luciana, as Helena offers herself to Demetrius, and he refuses her for her friend Hermia. Hermia bids

* ‘In the second act of the *Comedy of Errors* (scene ii) occurs the following dialogue:

“Luciana. Dromio, go bid the servants spread for dinner.
 Dromio S. O, for my beads ! I cross me for a sinner.
 This is the fairyland ! O, spite of spites !
 We talk with goblins, owls, and elvish sprites !
 If we obey them not, this will ensue,
 They’ll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue.
 Luciana. Why prat’st thou to thyself, and answer’st not ?
 Dromio, thou drone, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot !
 Dromio S. I am transformed, master, am I not ?
 Ant. S. I think thou art, in mind, and so am I.
 Dromio S. Nay, master, both in mind, and in my shape.
 Ant. S. Thou hast thine own form.
 Dromio S. No, I am an ape.
 Luciana. If thou art changed to aught, ‘tis to an ass.
 Dromio S. ‘Tis true ; she rides me, and I long for grass.
 ‘Tis so : I am an ass, else it could never be,
 But I should know her as well as she knows me’—189-204.

When Shakespeare wrote thus of fairyland—of the pranks of Robin Goodfellow, and of the transformation of a man to an ass, can it be doubted that he had in his thoughts *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?—Professor Edward Dowden’s *Shakespeare : His Mind and Art*, p. 66. .

Demetrius love Helena, as Luciana bids Antipholus love his supposed wife Adriana. In the background of the *Errors* we have the father *Aegeon*, with the sentence of death or fine pronounced by Duke Solinus. In the *Dream* we have in the background the father *Egeus*, with the sentence of death or celibacy on Hermia pronounced by Duke Theseus. We have an interesting connection with Chaucer in that the Theseus and Hippolyta are taken from the *Knight's Tale*, and meet again in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*; also the May-day and St Valentine, and the wood birds here may be from Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*. The fairies, too, are in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. As links with *Love's Labour's Lost*, we notice the comedy of errors in the earlier play, the forest scene, and the country sub-play; while, as opposed to the *Love's Labour's Lost's* "Jack hath not Gill," the fairies tell us here, "Jack shall have Gill." The fairies are the centre of the drama; the human characters are just the sport of their whims and fancies.* We may note in addition that there are some indications in favour of this earlier date to be found in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, which, in its first form, is due to 1592. There we have the forest scene and the fairies and the comedy of errors in the mistaken lovers; there the manner in which the fairies are characterised, and the style in which they speak, and the household blessings they give, have much resemblance to those of the *Dream*. In the one Bottom is seen with 'an ass's nowl,' and in the other Falstaff appears disguised with a buck's head on, and moralises: 'I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass' (V, iv, 126). In Oberon's vision he does willing honour to Queen Elizabeth, and in the charge he gives the fairies (suppositions though they are) to make Windsor Castle 'worthy the owner, and the owner it' (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, V, iv, 64), he exhibits the same loyalty as became one of her Majesty's servants; and some commentators have even hinted that a thousand years hence some eloquent professor of English literature may recognise Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh in Theseus and Hippolyta.

Edmund Malone, in the *Chronological Order of Shakespeare's Plays*, prefixed to the *Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (1790), while assigning the *Midsummer Night's Dream* to 1592, says: 'The poetry of the piece, glowing with all the warmth of a youthful and lively imagination; the many scenes which it contains of almost continual

* Leopold Shakespeare, Introduction, p. 26.

rhymes ; the poverty of the fable, and want of discrimination among the higher personages, dispose me to believe that it was one of our author's earliest attempts in comedy'—Vol. i, part i, p. 283. In 1592, however, Shakespeare was twenty-eight years of age, not quite a youth. Malone was influenced in his opinion by the idea that Shakespeare referred in it to Spenser's *The Tears of the Muses*, published in 1591. Besides, as he believed that Shakespeare was an unscrupulous borrower of other men's thoughts and plots, and knew that Oberon and Titania had been introduced into a dramatic entertainment presented to Queen Elizabeth at Lord Hartford's mansion of Elvetham, in Hampshire, in 1591 ; that a player boasts, in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), of his having performed the king of the fairies with applause ; and that in that author's *James IV*, which though only entered at Stationers' Hall in 1594, and printed in 1598, was produced prior to his death in September 1592, there is 'a pleasant comedie presented by Oberon, King of Fayeries'—Malone thought himself bound to date this play as subsequent to the foregoing productions. It is, however, quite as likely that the popularity of Shakespeare's *Dream* led to these adoptions and adaptations of his fairy characters. The Rev. F. G. Fleay, whose critical acumen few can doubt, dates it 1592 ; Dr Nathan Drake, 1593 ; Charles Knight and W. W. Lloyd, 1594 ; and J. O. Halliwell—founding his opinion upon an industriously accumulated induction of meteorological facts of a most interesting nature—supposes 'this play to have been written in the autumn of that year ;' and S. W. Singer agrees with him. Dyce and Delius place it a little later ; Gerald Massey suggests 1595 ; J. A. Heraud, 1596 ; and Alexander Chalmers assigns it to 1598, because we have Meres' testimony that it then existed.

Taking, so far as we are able, the whole of the evidences adduced by these several writers, and others who follow them, we think the likelihood is that the play was planned in the midsummer of 1590, produced as a masque at the court at Christmas, became popular and the subject of imitation, and that after a run of a winter or two, it was revised about 1596, and re-introduced to the stage in a more developed form. It is only further necessary to note that, though W. R. Chetwood in the *British Theatre*, Dublin, 1750, quotes, 'A moste pleasante comedie, called *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the freekes of the fairies, as published in 1595'—of which no copy is known—the only early intimation of the play is contained in Meres' *Palladis Tamia*,

issued 1598. Regarding the first known published copies, we can merely supply the following epitome of facts:

On 'October 8, 1600,' there was inserted in the Stationers' Registers, for Thomas Fisher, an entry of 'a booke called *A Mydsomer Nyghte Dreame.*' Shortly thereafter the book was issued, and bore the following title-page, '*A Midsommer Night's Dreame.* As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants. Written by William Shakespeare. [A device of a halcyon with a fish in its mouth here occupies the centre of the title-page.] Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fisher, and are to be soulde at his shoppe, at the signe of the White Hart in Fleetstreete, 1600.' Another impression appeared in the same year, but no memorandum of it appears in the books of the Stationers' Hall. It proceeded from the press of James Roberts, a printer, and had, as nearly as possible, the same words on its title-page as its predecessor—viz., '*A Midsommer Night's Dreame.* As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants. Written by William Shakespeare. Printed by James Roberts, 1600.' On comparing these two quartos,' the editors of the *Cambridge Shakespeare* say, 'we find that they correspond page for page, though not line for line, except in the first five pages of sheet G. The printer's errors in Fisher's edition are corrected in that issued by Roberts; and from this circumstance, coupled with the facts that in the Roberts' quarto the "exits" are more frequently marked, and that it was not entered at Stationers' Hall as Fisher's edition was, we infer that the Roberts' quarto was a pirated reprint of Fisher's, probably for the use of the players. This may account for its having been followed by the First Folio. Fisher's edition, though carelessly printed, contains, on the whole, the best readings, and may have been taken from the author's manuscript.* Charles Knight, who was a practical printer, thought that 'it is difficult to say whether both of these were printed with the consent of the author, or whether one was genuine and the other pirated. . . . One thing is perfectly clear to us,' he says—'that the original of these editions, whichever it might be, was printed from a genuine copy, and carefully superintended through the press. The text appears to us to be as perfect as it is possible to be, considering the state of typography in that day. There is one remarkable evidence of this. The prologue to the

* *The Cambridge Shakespeare*, vol. ii, preface, p. 8.

interlude of the clowns in the fifth act is purposely made inaccurate in its punctuation throughout. The speaker does not stand upon points. It was impossible to have effected the object better than by the punctuation of Roberts' edition; and this is precisely one of those matters of nicety in which a printer would have failed, unless he had followed an extremely clear copy, or his proof had been corrected by an author or editor. The play was not reprinted after 1600, till it was collected into the Folio of 1623; and the text in that edition differs in very few instances, and those very slight ones, from that of the preceding quartos.'

'The comedy of the clowns in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* must have come to Germany before 1636, as the *Absurda Comica, or Mr Peter Squenz*, of Andrew Gryphius (born 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, died 1664, a hundred years after Shakespeare's birth), is an imitation of it, which the author confessed to have taken from a version by Daniel Schwenter, who died in 1636.*

The comical part of the plot was transformed into a separate play, entitled the *Merry Conceited Humours of Bottom the Weaver* (1646), by Robert Cox, comedian, and this was subsequently reprinted in Francis Kirkham's *Wits; or, Sport upon Sport* (1673). David Garrick produced this play without the comic portion, under the title of *The Fairies*, an opera (1755), and it has been re-issued so in Garrick's dramatic works. Acting editions, with alterations and annotations, have been published under the care of George Daniel (1828), J. R. Planche (1840), Charles Kean (1856), etc. A comic masque of *Pyramus and Thisbie*, by Richard Leveridge, was placed on the stage in 1716, and a mock opera, on the same subject, by J. F. Lampe, in 1745. Under the name of the *Quarrel of Oberon and Titania*, a fairy drama, Leigh Hunt has arranged the fairy part of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* into a separate little play contained in his *Imagination and Fancy*, pp. 169-182.

SECTION VI.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE PLOT, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE PLAY.

'The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is what its title indicates — a dream over which broods the magical dimness of a

* *Shakespeare in Germany*, by Albert Cohn, 1865, p. cxxx.

summer night—half hiding and half-revealing scenes where nature slumbers in the most luxurious beauty. But it is also the dream of a poet—such a dream as no poet save one ever dreamt. Everything is visionary, everything unreal, but unreal and visionary as the shapes are which Sleep brings on its wings from the world of thought; and visionary and unreal in the sense and manner in which those images are so, which would visit thus the fancy of one whose waking meditations are equally at home in the turmoil of crowded life, and by the solitary edge of the haunted stream. The characters who step forward, the feelings they evince, the acts they do, all partake of the same aerial nature. Four groups of figures, in themselves incongruous and scarcely, by any invention, capable of being united in actual life, mingle in the tumult of this witching night of St John [the Baptist]; and as we gaze on them through the shadowy moonlight, they become harmonised to the mind's eye as completely as the wildest apparitions are harmonised in the fancy of the sleeper. The fairy-band who hover half-unseen,

“By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea”—II, ii, 25, 26;

the two heroic figures of the vision, heroically and gorgeously coloured—the Grecian hero of a thousand tales, and his warrior-love, the buskined Amazon; the Athenian lovers, poetical in their fancy, but real in the weakness and inconstancy of their affection; the cluster of ambitious artisans, unconsciously holding up poetry, dramatic art, and the tragedy of life itself as a theme of merriment—where did such groups ever encounter, where did such ever act upon each other, except in the young dreamer's brain? And where did such groups ever appear in successful dramatic combination, except in this one work, the most purely poetical of the author's compositions, and also one of the most highly finished.*

The play is indeed a dream dramatised. The real is so strangely invested with the mysterious indefiniteness of unreality, that it seems almost as if life itself were but a vision; and the unreal is made so palpable and so familiar, that fiction appears to be endowed with unchallengeable reality. A congruous incongruity, and an inconsequent sequence, blend in mystic marvellousness, and the exquisite lapse and

* *Recent Shakespearian Literature*, by the late Professor W. Spalding, in *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxxi, p. 479.

glide of scene into scene, by some strange law, of regularity giving order to the confusion of fiction and fact, realises to us a poet's dream in its fantastic weirdness, its romantic incidents, and its luxuriant beauty and melody. Well indeed did Coleridge divine when he said, 'I am convinced that Shakespeare did actually dream this drama on a Midsummer Night.' Aubrey, at any rate, is our authority for saying that Coleridge was right. Speaking of Shakespeare, that antiquarian says: 'He was a handsome, well-shaped man, very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant, smooth wit. The humour of . . . the constable in *Midsummer Night's Dream* he happened to take at Grendon in Bucks, which is the road from London to Stratford, and there was living that constable about 1642, when I first came to Oxon. I think it was Midsummer Night that he happened to be there. Mr Jos. Howe is of that parish, and knew him.'

Shakespeare not only enjoyed the amusement of that night, but has immortalised the 'humour' of it. Without doubt, Shakespeare dreamed after the day's fatigue and the evening's merriment, and that '*Midsummer Night's Dream*' formed the suggestive source of this pleasant drama.

One Midsummer's Eve, Shakespeare, on his way to Stratford, in the holiday season, had reached the rural village of Grendon in Buckinghamshire. He had probably been reading John Stowe's folio edition of Chaucer's works (1561), in search of a taking plot for a play, prior to his leaving London; and having fixed upon the *Knight's Tale* as suitable for his purpose, had ridden along in a reflective mood,* digesting the story of *Palamon and Arcite* into scenic form. In Grendon his fancy was tickled by one of the 'characters' of that village, the constable, or captain of the watch, who was taking an active part in the carrying out of the pranks and freaks which then lent jollity to the Festival of the Nativity of John the Baptist; and he resolved to enjoy the 'very good piece of work,' 'and a merry,' which had been in

* He may even have so far gone on with his projected play as to have planned, sketched out, and in part written the *Two Noble Kinsmen*—a play 'presented at the Blackfriars by the King's Majesties' Servants with great applause,' and stated, on its first publication in 1634, to have been 'written by the memorable worthies of their time, Mr John Fletcher and Mr William Shakespeare'—when induced to place that portion of uncompleted work among 'the laid-by labours of his youth,' and to devote his genius to weave the frail threads of his *Dream* into those 'unrivalled tissues of novel thought and divine fancy' for which this play is remarkable.

rehearsal. Accordingly he put up at the inn for the night, and looked with interested eyes and heart upon the country revels of the rustics as they enjoyed their sports. The constable of that parish, responsible as he was for the preservation of the peace, had apparently resolved to manage the St John's Eve festivities himself, so that he might not only know all that was going on, but exercise the control of a leader among those who were engaged in them. The vanity, activity, and masterfulness of this petty officer seems to have tickled Shakespeare's fancy, and while he was taking his ease in his inn, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of watching the amusing pranks of the constable of Grendon and his associates, as they did their best to enliven the long evening with a moral play and the usual fun of Midsummer's Night. Perhaps John Aubrey had heard the story from the very lips of the original of Bottom the weaver, told with all the garrulous glee of an old man who had actually performed before the poet of all time on the village square at Grendon. It is more probable, however, that he learned it at second hand from Josiah Howe, a poet and divine, who was born at Grendon, and was a fellow-student of Aubrey's at Oxford, who knew the man, then nearly eighty years of age, as fifty-two years had by that time (1642) elapsed, and constables were not eligible till they were twenty-five years of age.

We have little doubt that the adaptive spirit of Shakespeare founded this play on an actual Midsummer Night's dream; and that he saw in the production of such a piece an opportunity of producing a masterpiece of art, a masque for beauty of poetic imagery, and a drama full of plot, interest, and entertainment. It has always been a difficulty with critics to discover how the play is to be understood, and many theories of the relations of its parts have been formed. Shakespeare, of course, found their synthesis in his suggesting dream—amended as it was by his sagacious mind and his brilliant imagination. The reader had better surrender himself first of all to enjoy the delicious poetry of the work, and thereafter pursue the philosophy of its production and construction. The best aids to the comprehension of the relations of the parts of the plot to one another, are to be found in the following excerpts from good critics:

'The first act is nearly equally divided between two actions—the one occupying the first, the other the second scene; the two parties in which, without in the smallest degree intermingling, arrange themselves so as to admit of certain complications, the dominant feeling in the one case being refined

sentiment, in the other a ridiculous ambition. In act second we are presented for the first time with a new creation, that of the fairies. Henceforward the first two actions, so remarkably separated in Act I, are gradually interwoven with the third, though nowhere with each other. In the beings of which the third group is composed, nothing is so characteristic as the humanity of their motives and passions—humanity modified by the peculiarities of the fairy race. We find working in them splenetic jealousy, love, hatred, revenge—all the passions of men—the littleness of soul brought out by each being, as we think, designedly exaggerated. Their movements, too, are eminently significant of a vigorous dramatic action, the story being almost epic in form—the tale of the *Wrath of Oberon*; of which, as it gradually and uniformly advances, we are enabled to trace in the play the origin, development, and consequences. The hypothesis, then, which we wish to put forward is, that the fairies are the primary conception of the piece, and their action the main action; that Shakespeare wished to represent this fanciful creation in contact with two strongly-marked extremes of human nature; the instruments by which they influence them being aptly enough, in the one case the ass's head, in the other the "little western flower." The singular arrangement of the first act [is] purposely designed to exhibit successively the characteristics of the two groups in marked opposition, before exposing them to the influence of the fairies, [and] the interlude of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is the ingenious machinery by which, after the stage has ceased to be occupied by the fairy action, these two otherwise independent groups are wrought together and amalgamated. The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is a dream on the night of Midsummer Day, a night sanctified to the operations of the fairies, as Hallowe'en was to those of the witches. The play is distributed into three distinguishable portions : (1) Those included in Act I; (2) in Acts II, III, and the first scene of Act IV; and (3) in the last scene of Act IV, together with Act V. The second and far the most important division comprehends all the transactions of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; its action is carefully restricted to the duration of these twelve witching hours (Oberon having, as he says, to perform all before "the first cock crow.") While those of the first and third portions take place at distances of two days and one day respectively. Here, then, we have a stringent reason for Shakespeare's arrangement. He could not introduce us to the two subordinate groups, show us their

intended relations, and in the end interweave them by a consistent process, without separating them, when operating *per se* from the main action. He could, for instance, neither account for the appearance of the lovers in the wood, without a previous exposition of their difficulties, and of the agreement to fly on "morrow deep midnight," nor for that of the stage-struck artisans, without some intimation of the intention to act a play, which made a rehearsal necessary. He could not follow his usual practice of developing the relations and positions of all his characters, because the limitation to twelve hours would not admit it—and out of these twelve hours he could not remove the fairy action. So that the first and last sections of the drama, in which the main action does not proceed and only the subordinate groups appear, have nothing to do with the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, but are merely exegetical of it. . . . We are desirous that the fairies should assume in this play a position commensurate with the influence they must always exercise over English literature. Great as is the direct importance of combined purity and beauty in a national mythology, the indirect value is even greater. We have escaped much as well as gained much, if our imagination has conversed with a more delicate creation than the sensuous divinities of Greece, or the vulgar spectres of Walpurgis Night. But whether the *entente cordiale* between England and fairyland be for good or for evil, we must at any rate acknowledge that the connection virtually began on that very *Midsummer Night* which witnessed the quarrel between Oberon and Titania—a quarrel fruitful in perplexities to other people besides Bottom and the Athenian lovers.*

Charles Cowden Clarke thinks that 'in the play now under consideration, the "subordinate" agents pre-occupy the mind by reason of their great potency and surpassingly beautiful creation, or by the engrossing demand that others make on our attention on account of their fine dramatic nature and veri-similitude, with side-shaking broad humour. Really and truly, Demetrius and Lysander, Hermia and Helena, with their love-crosses and perplexities, constitute the chief agents in the drama. Their way of life is the "plot"—disturbed, it is true, by the madcap sprite, Puck, whose mischievous agency is so admirably employed to distort the course of their true love, and with a two-handed scheme to

* *Edinburgh Review*, April 1848, 'The *Midsummer Night's Dream*', pp. 426-429.

befool poor little Titania, becomes not only the important movement in the machinery, but in fact we scarcely think of any other in conjunction with him ; he and his fellow-minims of the moon's watery beams, are the great (though little) people of the drama. Bottom and his companions are the cap and bells ; and the classic stateliness of Theseus and Hippolyta, with their sedate and formal nuptialities, form—as Schlegel happily observes—"a splendid frame to the picture." These take no part in the action, but appear with stately pomp, and dwell apart in royal exclusiveness.'*

' I will tell you what I most admire in the play ; it is the reconciling power of the poet. He brings together such marvellous contrasts, without a single shock or jar to your feeling of the artistic harmony of the combination. Think for a moment,—the ordinary commonplace courtiers ; the lovers, men and women in the condition of all conditions in which fairy power might get hold of them ; the quarrelling king and queen of fairyland, with the courteous [Peas-] Blossom, Cobweb, and the rest ; and the court-jester, Puck ; the ignorant, clownish artisans rehearsing their play—fairies and clowns, lovers and courtiers, are all mingled in one exquisite harmony, clothed with a night of early summer, rounded in by the wedding of the king and queen.'†

' The cross-purposes and vain strivings, impediments and disappointments, that form "the fierce vexation of a dream," are intertwined with the stuff of all the incidents : inability to flee, inability to pursue, struggles with the difficult, acceptance as mere matter of fact of the impossible, forebodings and sudden frights—these are the entertainments of uneasy sleep, and when we wake we have relief of just the same kind as that enjoyed by the lovers when they are roused by the hunting horn of Theseus, and find that "vexation" has vanished with drowsiness, and that their troubles were all groundless, or that, at any rate, the fairies have arranged them while they slept. Thus the play is a dream dramatised, and the fairies are introduced as the agents who transform the real into the fantastic, and then the fantastic back into the real.'‡

* *Shakespeare Characters* (1863), p. 96.

† George MacDonald's *The Seaboard Parish*, ch. xxxvi.

‡ W. W. Lloyd's *Essays on Shakespeare* (1858). Fifty copies printed for private circulation ; reprinted 1877.

SECTION VII.

NOTES ON THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

I.—CLASSICAL CHARACTERS.

I. THESEUS.—‘Pandion had four sons, *Ægeus*, Nisus, Lykus, and Pallas, between whom he divided his dominions. . . . *Ægeus*, as the eldest of the four, became king of Athens. . . . *Ægeus* has little importance in mythical history, except as the father of Theseus. . . . Thucydides delineates Theseus as a man who combined sagacity with political power, and who conferred upon his country the inestimable benefit of uniting all the separate and self-governing Demes of Attica into one common political society. . . . Theseus, in the *Iliad* (i, 265) and *Odyssey* (xi, 321), fights with the Lapithæ against the Centaurs: Theseus in the Hesiodic poems is misguided by his passion for the beautiful *Ægle*, daughter of Panopeus; and the Theseus described in Plutarch’s biography is, in great part, a continuation and expansion of these and similar attributes, mingled with many local legends, explaining . . . the original genesis of prevalent religious and social customs. Plutarch has, doubtless, greatly softened down and modified the adventures which he found in the Attic logographers, as well as in the poetical epics called Theseis. . . . Plutarch sat down, not to recount the old fables as he found them, but to purify them by reason, and to impart to them the aspect of history. We have to thank him for having retained, after this purification, so much of what is romantic and marvellous; but we may be sure that the sources from which he borrowed were more romantic and marvellous still. It was the tendency of the enlightened men of Athens, from the days of Solon downwards, to refine and politicise the character of Theseus; even Peisistratus expunged from one of the Hesiodic poems the line which described the violent passion of the hero for the fair *Ægle*; and the tragic poets found it more congenial to the feelings of their audience to exhibit him as a dignified and liberal sovereign, rather than as an adventurous, single-handed fighter. . . . Virgil must have had his mind full of the unrefined legends when he numbered this Attic Herakles among the unhappy sufferers condemned to endless penance in the under world:

"Sedet, æternumque sedebit infelix Theseus"
—Æneid, vi, 617.

"The luckless Theseus sits, and for ever will sit."**

Shakespeare, though indebted largely to Plutarch and Ovid (if to no other classical sources) for his knowledge of Theseus, undoubtedly derived his impressions of him rather from Gothic romance—through Boccaccio and Chaucer—than from the historic Greek of Thucydides, the legendary lays of Hesiod, or the rhetorical panegyrics of Isocrates. Theseus in Shakespeare is an Athenian duke, rather than a mythological hero. The whole cast of the character is that of the mediæval-antique, a modern in a Greek mask.

2. PHILOSTRATE.—It is very probable that Shakespeare derived the name from North's *Plutarch*, from which he took hints for the main plot of the play, though not from the part where that plot was found—the *Life of Theseus*. In the *Life of Marcus Antonius* (which we know Shakespeare used in the preparation of *Julius Caesar*) Plutarch mentions 'Philostratus, the eloquentest man of all the Sophisters and orators of his time, for present and sudden speech' (chap. lxxx); and the same philosopher's name is also used in *Cato*, chap. lvii. It may be, however, that his choice of this particular name may have been influenced by a knowledge of the fact that Flavius Philostratus, a native of Lemnos, who flourished in the early part of the second century of our era, taught rhetoric first at Athens, and then at Rome. In his *Heroica* the legends of Theseus are told. His nephew, bearing the same name, and he, had both composed works entitled *Imagines*.† This, though assuming, on Shakespeare's part, a larger amount of learning than his commentators and biographers usually accord to him, gives a singular aptness to the choice of a name for Theseus's 'usual manager of mirth.' Was it, after all, but a lucky chance which made him stumble on it? or did he take it direct from Chaucer?

' Page of the chamber of Emelyne the bright,
 And Philostrate he seide that he highte'
—Knight's Tale, 569, 570.

3. LYSANDER.—This is the name of one of the most famous of the generals and diplomatists of Sparta, who,

* Grote's *Greece*, vol. i, pp. 281-285.

† The earliest edition known to us of the works of the *Duo Philostrati* is, we must candidly acknowledge, that of Morellius at Paris, 1608.

while attempting to abolish hereditary, and establish elective monarchy in his native land, fell in battle under the walls of Haliartus, B.C. 395. There does not seem to be any association either between the history or the name (which means 'deliverer of men') of this person, and those of the character in the drama. It is used simply as a Greek proper name.

4. DEMETRIUS.—The Greek name Demetrius occurs in North's *Plutarch*, in the *Life of Marcus Brutus* (chap. xxix), as that of one of 'Cassius's men,' who brought his master's clothes and his sword also to Mark Antony. Several kings of Macedonia and of Syria bore this designation. There are two persons of this name mentioned in the New Testament (*Acts* xix, 24; *3 John* 12). Demetrius Phalereus, the last of the Attic orators worthy of the name, statesman, philosopher, and poet, to whom the government of Athens was entrusted by Cassander, B.C. 317, was also a literary name which Shakespeare may have heard of. But surely some knowledge of the derivation of the word must have been possessed by him, to induce his choice of a designation for this worthy gentleman, who is evidently intended by the author to be 'one devoted or belonging to Demeter or Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and rural life,' and the patroness of husbandmen.

5. ÆGEUS.—In Attic legendary story, Ægeus, the eldest of the four sons of Pandion, became king of Athens, and was the (reputed) father of Theseus; and by his suicide (in rash grief at the supposed non-success of his son in his expedition against the Minotaur) gave its name to the Ægean Sea. He takes no important rank in Attic mythology, and 'it may even be doubted,' as Grote states, 'whether his name is anything more than a mere cognomen for the god Poseidon (Neptune), who was (we are told) the real father of that great Attic Herakles (Hercules).' Shakespeare uses the name merely for convenience' sake, as that of a Greek noble, attached to the court of Theseus. He may have found it in Arthur Golding's *Ovid* (vii), in North's *Plutarch* (see *ante*, p. 14), or in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, e.g.:

'Upon the right hand went olde Ægeus,
And on that other syde Duk Theseus'—2047, 2048.

I. HIPPOLYTA.—'The Amazons, daughters of Ares (Mars) and Harmonia, are both early creations and frequent reproductions of the ancient epic. . . . Accordingly we find these warlike females constantly reappearing in the ancient

poems, and universally accepted as past realities. . . . Herakles goes to attack them, in performance of the ninth labour imposed upon him by Eurystheus, for the purpose of procuring the girdle of the Amazonian queen, Hippolyta. . . . Theseus also assaulted and defeated them, carrying off their queen, Antiope. This injury they avenged by invading Attica [under Hippolyta]. . . . They . . . penetrated even into Athens itself, where the first battle—hard-fought, and at one time doubtful—by which Theseus crushed them, was fought, in the very heart of the city'* The daughter of Ares and Otrera, sister of Antiope and Melanippe, when discomfited, was taken to wife by her conqueror, and became the mother of Hippolytus, the hero of the play by Euripides, bearing his name.

II. HERMIA.—This name probably signifies of or belonging to Hermes (Mercury); and therefore would imply that the bearer of it was true and eloquent. At the cross-roads on the highways about Athens, bust-statues of the god of speech and truth were erected. These were called *Hermæ*. Homer employs 'Epuelā as the vocative for Mercury, the son of Maia and Zeus, the messenger of the gods.

III. HELENA is described as old Nedar's daughter, and more than this we are not told about her. She probably received her name after Helen, daughter of Zeus and Leda, whose surpassing beauty induced Theseus and Perithous to carry her off to Attica, whence her brothers, Castor and Pollux, freed her. This Helen afterwards became the wife of Menelaus, was abducted by Paris, and became the primary cause of the Trojan war. The general suggestion of loveliness and the power of stirring love in others sufficiently justifies the poetic adoption of this name.

II.—FAIRY CHARACTERS.

I. OBERON.—The name of the king of the fairies, Oberon, is, according to Grimm, only that of the elfin dwarf of the story of Otnit in the *Heldenbuch* slightly altered. From the usual change of *l* into *u* (as 'al,' *au*, 'col,' *cou*, etc.) in the French language, Elberich or Albrich (derived from *Alp*, *Alf*) becomes Auberich; and *ich* not being a French termination, the diminutive *on* was substituted, and so it thus became *Auberon* or *Oberon*. 'Oberon,' according to Keightley, *Fairy Mythology*, 'appears to form a kind of connecting

* Grote's *Greece*, vol. i, pp. 286-288.

link between the fairies of romance and the elves or dwarfs of the Teutonic nations.' He is represented in *Huon de Bordeaux* as 'only three feet in height, he is all humpy, but he hath an angelic face; there is no mortal man who should see him who would not take pleasure in looking at him, he hath so fair a face.' In the old folk-story of 'The Wondrous Prowess and Doings of the noble Huon of Bordeaux, peer of France, Duke of Guienne,' etc., written in verse by Huon de Villeneuve in the thirteenth century, during the reign of Philippe Auguste, and subsequently, at the desire of Charles Seigneur de Rochfort, reduced to a popular prose-narrative in 1454, Oberon makes his advent in literature. *Huon of Bordeaux* was Englished by John Bourchier, Lord Berners, in the reign of Henry VIII, and a third edition of that translation was issued in 1601. The authōr of *Huon of Bordeaux* makes Oberon give an account of himself, which shows that only in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* could he have been regarded as coeval with Theseus; for he says: 'Verité est que Julius Cesar m'engendra en la Dame, en l'isle celée, . . . qui a present se nomma Chifalonia. . . . Cesar passa la mer, il alla en Thessallie, ou il combatit le grand Pompee, il passa par Chifalonia auquel lieu ma mère le festoya. Il s'en amoura d'elle pouru qu'elle luy dit, qu'il desconfiroit Pompee (comme il fit) et ainsi j'ay dicte que fut mon père,' etc. (It is true that Julius Cæsar was my progenitor by the Lady of the Hidden Isle, which is now called Cephalonia. . . . Cæsar crossed the sea, he went into Thessaly, where he fought Pompey the Great; he passed by Cephalonia, in which place my mother entertained him. He was beloved by her, because, as she said, he had discomfited Pompey (as he did), and thus I have told thee who was my father.) Our quotation is made from a rare old copy of *Huon of Bordeaux* (pp. 41, 42) printed at Rouen by Louis Coste, for the use of which we are indebted to David Laing, Esq., LL.D., of the library of the Writers to the Signet, Edinburgh.

2. TITANIA (*tītrāvā*, Titan-sprung).—The name given by Shakespeare to the fairy queen in this play is not that by which her elfin majesty was known among the English poets of the fifteenth century and their successors, and that given to her by Shakespeare himself in *Romeo and Juliet*, I, iv, 53—*Mab* (from Irish *Meabhdh*, a good princess of Erin's isle, or Welsh *mabin*, juvenile, youthful). Influenced by the classical cast of the plot, the poet has chosen a designation of Greek origin—though it was probably adapted by him from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (iii, 173), where Titania is

employed as a name for Diana. Thus he recalls to our memory the grace of Artemis, the protector of the young, the immortal huntress, who is the goddess of the moon, and the patron of chastity, and that of the lithe-limbed nymphs who attend her in gay, happy, splendid, and glowing groups of surpassing loveliness; and throws across his 'dream' the glamour of Greek mythology commixed with the sylvan mystery of the good spirits of the folk-lore of his own birth-land and times. His creative fancy has freshened with the vitality of the Hellenic divinities the rude outgrowths of the Celtic imagination, and added to the legendary glory of the Greek Diana the ethereal semi-humanity of the queen of the revels of the fairy tribes. As the plot mingles Athenian stateliness and English homeliness in its human elements, so has Shakespeare intermixed in his fancies of the fairies the delicate classical spirituality of the nymphs of the groves and streams of Greece with the sympathetic sprightliness of the elfin dancers on the green sward of the meadowlands and hill-slopes of Mid-England.

3. PUCK.—Robin Goodfellow or Hobgoblin, as he was variously called, enjoyed the reputation of being the master-spirit of mischief among the tribe of the fairies. In an old chapbook, entitled *Robin Goodfellow; His Mad Pranks and Merry Fests*, published in 1628, but which is believed by Mr J. P. Collier, concurred in, as to the first part of it at least, by Thomas Keightley and others, to have been issued from the press in 1588, if not 1584, he is represented as the son of King Oberon and a 'proper young wench' in England, though he is usually only regarded as the chief attendant and favourite of the sovereign of fairyland. The author of *Tarleton's News Out of Purgatory*, published by an old companion of his, Robin Goodfellow,' printed in 1590, assures us that Robin Goodfellow was 'famous in every old wife's chronicle for his mad, merry pranks;' and we learn from Henslowe's *Diary*, as edited by Mr Collier, that Henry Chettle was the writer of a drama on the adventures of that 'merry wanderer of the night' (II, i, 43).

The minor fairy characters bear the fancifully-derived names of—

Peasblossom—the butterfly-shaped flower of the pulse-plant.

Cobweb—the net or web of a spider, called, in Old English, *cop.* *Merchant of Venice*, III, ii, 123.

Moth—a very small, shining, lepidopterous insect. *Job* iv, 19; *Coriolanus*, I, iii, 94.

*Mustardseed—the smallest of all seeds, that of the *Sinapis nigra*. Matt. xiii, 31.*

III.—ENGLISH CHARACTERS.

1. PETER QUINCE.—The carpenter gets his name from a tree which was cultivated by the ancient Greeks and Romans—the κιδωνία μῆλα of Theophrastus and Dioscorides, and the *Malus Cydonia* of Roman naturalists. It is a native of the south of Europe and the temperate portions of Asia. Its fruit, which is of a rich yellow or orange colour, gives forth a strong smell. It is hard and austere, but when stewed with sugar becomes extremely pleasant, and is much used in this way either by itself, or to flavour apple-pies. The name fits well for the person who flavours this play with fun.

2. SNUG.—The joiner gets no Christian name. He seems to have been so favoured as the ‘hail-fellow’ of his comrades, that his name and trade were sufficient for a designation. Strangely enough, this word *snug*, so suggestive of cosy comfort and retired self-complacency, occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare; but there is little doubt that he employed it to indicate some lithe, handsome, pleasant-looking member of the company of the *Globe*.

3. NICHOLAS BOTTOM.—The weaver has received a most appropriate name. In an epigram of the Shakespearian time, published by John Fry of Bristol, 1814, in *Pieces of Ancient Poetry from Unpublished Manuscripts and Scarce Books*, p. 15, we find that the first name was common among professors of that trade:

‘ Nicke, the weaver’s boy, is dead and gone,
Surely his life was but a thrumme.’

A ball of thread, wound upon any cylindrical body, like a pirn, was formerly called a bottom of thread. The word occurs with this meaning in a small book of poems entitled *Grange’s Garden*, London, 4to, 1577:

‘A bottome for your silke, it seemes,
My letters are become,
Whiche, with oft winding off and on,
Are wasted whole and some.’

4. FRANCIS FLUTE.—The bellows-mender, as a practitioner on wind instruments, receives a suitably humorous appellative. A bellows-mender was not, however, in former times quite so lowly in condition as an artisan is in our

day. He had the care not only of the bulgy bulk of the instruments by which fires were quickened, but also of the apparatus for supplying air to organs, regals, and other instruments similarly played by pipes and bellows. In Ben Jonson's masque of *Pan's Anniversary; or, the Shepherd's Holiday*, a person of the same trade is mentioned as having 'the looking to' of all the lungs of the company, and to keep them in breath during pleasure. The flute is one of the oldest wind instruments. Its use was well known to the ancient Greeks, and perhaps there is a suggestion in the name of the soft feminine voice in which he was to perform his character in the inter-play.

5. TOM SNOUT.—The tinker receives his Dutch-derived cognomen (*snuyt*), most probably to imply that he was rather long-nosed ; though the suggestive appellative is, in truth, little else than a homely translation of the name of the poet (Ovidius Naso) from whose *Metamorphoses* the plot of the play in which he was to bear a small part was taken. Of course, as he was to do the 'lion fell' whose ravages effected such sad results, the rendering required to be degraded rather than elevated. The word is only once used elsewhere by our poet, and that is when Venus, in describing the terrible wild boar to Adonis, says that, 'His snout digs sepulchres where'er he goes'—*Venus and Adonis*, 622.

6. ROBIN STARVELING.—The tailor bears quite evidently a character name, which indicates and suggests the make-up of the actor who played the part. Gadshill says that old Sir John Falstaff 'is no starveling' (1 *Henry IV*, II, i, 76) ; and the fat knight rails at Prince Hal, as 'you starveling, you elf's skin, you dried neat's tongue, . . . you tailor's yard, you sheath,' etc. (1 *Henry IV*, II, iv, 270-273) ; and from these passages we see that he is intended to appear as a hunger-bitten, lean, and lanky person. This idea is probably due to the influence of the proverbial saying, that 'nine tailors make a man,' to which adage Shakespeare more than once alludes. See *King Lear*, II, ii, 60, 61 ; and *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 81.

THE ARGUMENT.

IN the good old times, when fancy and reality were more closely related than they are now, and dreamland had its own geography, Duke Theseus, the sovereign of Athens, was about to be married to Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. The city was preparing for revel and festivity in honour of these nuptials, and even its hard-handed artisans proposed to add to the sympathetic jollity by the performance of a play, which they did their best to con with care and rehearse in privacy.

Amid the stir of the time an old Athenian, named Egeus, brought his daughter Hermia before the duke's tribunal because she refused to wed the wealthy and comely Demetrius, whom he had chosen to be her husband, and preferred another young Athenian, called Lysander. In doing so she violated an old law of that city, which conferred on parents the right to compel their daughters to marry whomsoever they pleased, and punished disobedience with death, or dedication to Diana as vestal virgins for life. Egeus insisted on her compliance; but she, pleading that Demetrius had previously expressed a love-passion for her early friend Helena, and her own disinclination to the match, begged exemption from the operation of the cruel enactment. Great as the power of Theseus was, he could not revoke the law at will, and he was forced to decide against her; but with considerate mercy he allowed her four days to think over what she would do, and meanwhile adjourned the cause.

Hermia told the distressing result to Lysander, and he was greatly grieved at the tidings. As, however, the law was only binding on the inhabitants of the city, he proposed they should elude its incidence by eloping to the residence of a rich old aunt of his—whose heir he was to be—and being married there. Hermia gladly consented, and promised to steal out of her father's house by night, and meet him in a wood outside of the city walls. Unluckily she confided this secret assignation to Helena, and she communicated the intention of her friend to Demetrius, and, for the mere pleasure of accompanying him, proffered to lead him to the place of meeting in the wood.

This very wood was one of the special haunts of the fairy folk,

and at this time Oberon, their king, and Titania, the queen—who had hastened with their followers from the farthest steeps of India, to bless the bridal bed of Theseus and Hippolyta—were holding revel in its glades. There had, however, been a temporary personal disagreement between the royal consorts, because Oberon had sought from Titania a little changeling boy, whose mother had been her friend, and whom she had stolen from his nurses, after his mother's death, and brought up as her own page. Oberon, resolved on being avenged on Titania for thwarting his wishes, sent for his prime minister, Puck or Robin Goodfellow, and ordered him to bring the juice of the little purple flower called love-in-idleness, which possessed the singular power of making those whose eyes were anointed with it, while sleeping, dote in love upon the first thing they saw on their awaking. Some of this Oberon intended to drop on Titania's eyelids cunningly. He was waiting for the return of Puck, when he saw Demetrius and Helena in the wood, and overheard the former upbraid the latter with forcing her love on him, and her reproaching him for his fickle faithlessness. Oberon pitied Helena, and commanded Puck to follow this Athenian youth, and when he saw him so that the first thing he could see would be Helena, to anoint his eyes, and so bring him back to his true and honourable love. Puck promised obedience, and went in search of Demetrius, the only mark he had for knowing him by being his Athenian garments. After some search he came upon Lysander, who had entered the wood with Hermia on the way to his aunt's. He was lying asleep on a bank, with Hermia at a little distance from him; and Puck, making certain she would be the first thing on which he would turn his eyes, laid the love-charm gently on his lashes. It chanced, however, that Helena, who had been running after Demetrius, and had lost her way, got into the path where Lysander was lying, and seeing him, touched him, saying, ‘Good sir, if you are alive, awake and help me.’ Lysander opened his eyes, beheld Helena, and instantly fell deeply in love with her. She ran away, and he pursued, forgetting Hermia, who was there still fast asleep. When Hermia awoke, and found herself forsaken, she was sadly afraid, and wandered about the wood not knowing what could have befallen Lysander.

Oberon, who in the meantime had anointed Titania's eyes, saw Demetrius, overcome by fatigue, sleeping at a tree-root; and as he had learned that Puck had laid the love-charm on the wrong person, he touched the eyelids of Demetrius with the magic juice. At the moment that he awoke, Helena, who was fleeing from Lysander, attracted his attention, and the work of the charm commenced. Lysander and Demetrius both made love to Helena, and poor Hermia found herself jilted and forsaken. Of course she could not bear this patiently, and she and her rival had high words together. Intent now on each winning Helena, Lysander and Demetrius left them, to fight a duel. But Puck, at Oberon's command, threw a mist around them, and led them by feigned voices far apart from

each other, till they were entirely overcome by weariness, and lay down to rest.

Oberon's queen was quietly enjoying sweet sleep in the greenwood glade, altogether unaware of the trick her lord had played on her, while the rude mechanicals of Athens were rehearsing the play of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which they intended to present at the nuptials of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta. One of these actors—a weaver named Bottom, had just retired from playing his part, into the glade where Titania was sleeping. Puck, in a most dexterous manner, fixed an ass's head on the 'actor,' and when Titania awoke, the first thing her love-charmed eyes beheld was Bottom thus transformed. At once her fancy was caught by him, and he complacently received all her endearments. She crowned him with wild-flowers, and as he felt fatigued, she wreathed her arms around him, and he lay down to rest. Oberon on this came to the spot, reproached the queen with her insane fancy; and she, anxious to make peace with her lord, agreed to yield the changeling to him. He put some of the juice of the *Agnus castus* on her eyes, and she saw the error of her ways; and thereafter he took the ass's head off the artisan-actor. On their being reconciled, Oberon told Titania the tale of the lovers, and they agreed to use their best endeavours to bring their distresses to an end. Puck had brought them all together to one place, and had removed from Lysander's eyes the effects of the love-charm. Hermia first awoke, and seeing Lysander near her, wondered if her experience of his unfaithfulness was but a dream; and he, on coming to his senses, could not believe that he had been so changeable and changed. Demetrius and Helena, on their awaking, were full of love as formerly they had been; and when they had all consulted together, they thought the best thing that could be done was to ask Egeus to refrain from invoking the law, and to allow them to marry for true love as they desired. Egeus, who had set out in dire wrath to pursue his daughter and her lover, came just then into the wood, and learning the condition of matters, was inclined to yield, when his wavering design was effectually fixed by the arrival of Theseus and Hippolyta on the spot, when out on an early morning hunting expedition. Theseus at once accepted the changed circumstances, and proposed that the two happy couples should be joined in holy matrimony at the same time as he and his Amazon bride were wedded. This was done. The marriage festivities were sumptuous, and the entertainments of the evening were varied by the performance of Peter Quince's play of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, by Bottom and his co-partners. The fairy king and queen, delighted at the happy issue of events, blessed the bridal chambers of the three loving Athenian couples, and the whole of the people enjoyed their joy so fully that they had great difficulty in believing that the pleasures of the season had not been all a Midsummer Night's dream, and few people since have been able clearly to decide whether the strange circumstances of that strange time were the creations of fancy or the realities of fact.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

I.—CLASSICAL CHARACTERS.

THESEUS, *Duke of Athens.*

PHILOSTRATE, *Master of the Revels to THESEUS.*

LYSANDER, } *in love with HERMIA.*
DEMETRIUS,

EGEUS, *Father to HERMIA.*

HIPPOLYTA, *Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to THESEUS.*

HERMIA, *Daughter to EGEUS, in love with LYSANDER.*

HELENA, 'NEDAR's Daughter,' *in love with DEMETRIUS.*

Attendants on THESEUS and HIPPOLYTA.

II.—FAIRY CHARACTERS.

OBERON, *King of the Fairies.*

TITANIA, *Queen of the Fairies.*

PUCK, or ROBIN GOODFELLOW, *a Fairy.*

PEASBLOSSOM,
COBWEB,
MOTH,
MUSTARDSEED,

} *Fairies.*

Other Fairies attending their King and Queen.

III.—ENGLISH CHARACTERS.

QUINCE, *the Carpenter,*
SNUG, *the Joiner,*
BOTTOM, *the Weaver,*
FLUTE, *the Bellows-mender,*
SNOUT, *the Tinker,*
STARVELING, *the Tailor,*

} *Characters in the
Interlude performed
by the Clowns.*

PROLOGUE.
LION.
PYRAMUS.
THISBE.
WALL.
MOONSHINE.

SCENE—ATHENS, and a Wood not far from it.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

A C T I.

SCENE I.—ATHENS. *A Room in the Palace of THESEUS.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, oh, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue. 5

Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities. 10

The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals—
The pale companion is not for our pomp.— 15

[Exit PHILOSTRATE.]

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke! 20

The. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her:— 21

Stand forth, Lysander ;—and, my gracious duke,
This hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchang'd love-tokens with my child :
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love ;
And stol'n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats,—messengers
Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth ;—
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart ;
Turned her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness.—And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,—
As she is mine I may dispose of her :
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death ; according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

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The. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd, fair maid :
To you, your father should be as a god ;
One that compos'd your beauties ; yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
By him imprinted, and within his power
To leave the figure, or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

50

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is :
But, in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

55

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty
In such a presence, here, to plead my thoughts :
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case :—
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

60

The. Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires,
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,

65

You can endure the livery of a nun;
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon.
Thrice blessed they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage:
But earthier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and by the next new moon,—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,
For everlasting bond of fellowship,—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will;
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia;—and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

Ege. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love;
And what is mine my love shall render him;
And she is mine; and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius's;
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia:
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come;

And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me ;
 I have some private schooling for you both.—
 For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
 To fit your fancies to your father's will,
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up,—
 Which by no means we may extenuate,—
 To death, or to a vow of single life.—
 Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?
 Demetrius, and Egeus, go along :
 I must employ you in some business
 Against our nuptial, and confer with you
 Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt THES., HIP., EGE., DEM., and Train.*

Lys. How now, my love ! why is your cheek so pale ?
 How chance the roses there do fade so fast ?

Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well
 Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes.

Lys. Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,
 Could ever hear by tale or history,
 The course of true love never did run smooth :
 But either it was different in blood,—

Her. O cross ! too high to be entrall'd to low !

Lys. Or else misgraffed in respect of years ;—

Her. O spite ! too old to be engag'd to young !

Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends :

Her. O hell ! to choose love by another's eye !

Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
 War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
 Making it momentary as a sound,
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;
 Brief as the lightning in the collied night
 That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
 And ere a man hath power to say, Behold !
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up :
 So quick bright things come to confusion.

Her. If, then, true lovers have been ever cross'd,
 It stands as an edict in destiny :
 Then let us teach our trial patience,
 Because it is a customary cross ;
 As due to love, as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,
 Wishes, and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Lys. A good persuasion ; therefore, hear me, Hermia.
 I have a widow aunt, a dowager
 Of great revenue, and she hath no child :

115

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From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only sor. 160
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me, then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood a league without the town, 165
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head, 170
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,—
By all the vows that ever men have broke, 175
In number more than ever woman spoke,—
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Her. God speed fair Helena! Whither away? 180
Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. 185
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190
The rest I'll give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look; and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.
Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love. 196
Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move!
Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.
Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.
Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

Her. Take comfort; he no more shall see my face;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.—

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens like a paradise to me:

205

O then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven unto hell!

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:

To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass,

21C

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,—

A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,—

Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Her. And in the wood where often you and I

Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,

215

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my Lysander and myself shall meet:

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,

To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us,

220

And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!—

Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight

From lovers' food, till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia.

[Exit HERMIA.]

Helena, adieu:

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [Exit Lys. 225]

Hel. How happy some o'er other some can be!

Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;

He will not know what all but he do know.

And, as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,

230

So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;

And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.

235

Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste;

Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:

And therefore is love said to be a child,

Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,

240

So the boy Love is perjur'd everywhere:

For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,

He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt. 245
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight;
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
 Pursue her; and for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again. 250
 [Exit.

SCENE II.—*The Same. A Room in a Cottage.*

Enter SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, QUINCE, and STARVELING.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess on his wedding-day at night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow on to a point. 10

Quin. Marry, our play is—‘The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.’

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.—Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll.—Masters, spread yourselves.

Quin. Answer as I call you.—Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant? 19

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest:—yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. 25

‘The raging rocks,
 With shivering shocks,
 Shall break the locks
 Of prison gates:

‘And Phibus' car
 Shall shine from far,
 And make and mar
 The foolish Fates.’ 30

This was lofty!—Now, name the rest of the players.—This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein;—a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You must take Thisby on you.

Flu. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

Quin. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flu. Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quin. That's all one; you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too: I'll speak in a monstrous little voice;—*Thisne, Thisne.*—Ah, *Pyramus, my lover dear; thy Thisby dear! and lady dear!*

Quin. No, no, you must play Pyramus; and, Flute, you Thisby.

Bot. Well, proceed.

50

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quincé.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.—Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus's father; myself, Thisby's father;—Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part:—and, I hope, there is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you *the lion's part* written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

60

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, *Let him roar again, let him roar again.*

Quin. If you should do it too terribly you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

68

All. That would hang us every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus: for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see on a summer's day; a most lovely, gentleman-like man; therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

78

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw-coloured beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow. 84

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced.—But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse: for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not. 93

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse more obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect; adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; hold, or cut bow-strings.

[*Exeunt.*

A C T I I.

SCENE I.—*A Wood near Athens.*

Enter a Fairy at one door, and PUCK at another.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire, 5
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. 15
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night;
 Take heed the queen come not within his sight.
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20
 Because that she, as her attendant, hath
 A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king;
 She never had so sweet a changeling:
 And jealous Oberon would have the child
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild: 25
 But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
 Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy:
 And now they never meet in grove or green,
 By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,
 But they do square; that all their elves, for fear, 30
 Creep into acorn cups, and hide them there.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are you not he
 That fright the maidens of the villagery; 35
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
 Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck, 40
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
 Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
 In very likeness of a roasted crab;
 And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
 And on her wither'd dew-lap pour the ale. 50
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
 And tailor cries, and falls into a cough;
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and lofie, 55
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.—
 But room, fairy, here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress.—Would that he were gone!

SCENE II.

Enter OBERON, at one door, with his Train, and TITANIA, at another, with hers.

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Tita. What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence; I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

Tita. Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stol'n away from fairy-land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here?—
Come from the farthest steep of India,—
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded; and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Obe. How can'st thou thus, for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravish'd?
And make him with fair Æglé break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa?

Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or on the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat; and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock;
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud;
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,

For lack of tread, are undistinguishable.
 The human mortals want their winter here;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:—
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound: 45
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
 And on old Hyem's chin and icy crown 50
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer-buds
 Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries; and the maz'd world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which: 55
 And this same progeny of evils comes
 From our debate, from our dissension:
 We are their parents and original.

Obe. Do you amend it, then: it lies in you:
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon? 60
 I do but beg a little changeling boy
 To be my henchman.

Tita. Set your heart at rest;
 The fairy-land buys not the child of me.
 His mother was a vot'ress of my order:
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night, 65
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side;
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood;
 When we have laugh'd to see the sails conceive,
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind: 70
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
 Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire,—
 Would imitate; and sail upon the land,
 To fetch me trifles, and return again,
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise. 75
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
 And for her sake I do rear up her boy:
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

Obe. How long within this wood intend you stay?
Tita. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day. 80
 If you will patiently dance in our round,
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Obe. Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom: Fairies, away: 85
We shall chide downright if I longer stay.

[*Exit TITANIA and her Train.*

Obe. Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.—
My gentle Puck, come hither: thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory, 90
And heard a mermaid, on a dolphin's back,
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres
To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember. 95

Obe. That very time I saw,—but thou could'st not,—
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal, throned by the west;
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow, 100
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts:
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon;
And the imperial votaress pass'd on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free. 105
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,—
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,—
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I shou'd thee once: 110
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb: and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league. 115

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [*Exit PUCK.*

Obe. Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:
The next thing then she waking looks upon,— 120
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,—
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm off from her sight,—
As I can take it with another herb,— 125
I'll make her render up her page to me.

But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stol'n into this wood,
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet with Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

130

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel. Leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

135

Dem. Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you I do not, nor I cannot love you?

140

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel: and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be us'd as you do your dog?

145

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit;
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city, and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night,
And the ill counsel of a desert place,
With the rich worth of your virginity.

155

Hel. Your virtue is my privilege for that.
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night:
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company;
For you, in my respect, are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone
When all the world is here to look on me?

160

Dem. I'll run from thee, and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

165

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd;
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger,—bootless speed,
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

170

Dem. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me: do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

175

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex:
We cannot fight for love as men may do:
We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.
I'll follow thee, and make a heaven of hell,
To die upon the hand I love so well.

180

[*Exeunt DEM. and HEL.*

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.—

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where ox-lips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with lush woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight; 190
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love 195
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

200

195

200

205

Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Another part of the Wood.**Enter TITANIA, with her Train.*

Tita. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
 Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
 To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
 The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
 Then to your offices, and let me rest.

5

SONG.

I.

1 Fai. You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
 Newts and blind-worms do no wrong;
 Come not near our fairy queen:

10

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody,
 Sing in our sweet lullaby:
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby:
 Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh:
 So, good night, with lullaby.

15

II.

2 Fai. Weaving spiders, come not here;
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence;
 Beetles black, approach not near;
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.

20

CHORUS.

Philomel, with melody, etc.

1 Fai. Hence, away; now all is well:
 One, aloof, stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies. TITANIA sleeps.* 25]

Enter OBERON.

Obe. What thou seest, when thou dost wake,
 [Squeezes the flower on TITANIA'S eyelids.
 Do it for thy true-love take;
 Love and languish for his sake;
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wak'st, it is thy dear;
 Wake when some vile thing is near.

30

[*Exit.*]

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
And, to speak troth, I have forgot our way;
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day. 35

Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth. 40

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
Lie farther off yet, do not lie so near.

Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence;
Love takes the meaning in love's conference. 45
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit;
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchainèd with an oath;
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie. 50

Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:—
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy 55
Lie farther off; in human modesty,
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid:
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend:
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end! 60

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed: Sleep give thee all his rest!

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!
[They sleep.

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve 65
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence! who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said, 70
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.

Pretty soul! she durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe;
 When thou wak'st let love forbid
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
 So awake when I am gone;
 For I must now to Oberon.

75

80

[Exit.]

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

85

Dem. Stay on thy peril; I alone will go.

[Exit DEMETRIUS.]

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!
 The more my prayer the lesser is my grace.
 Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies,
 For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
 How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
 If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.
 No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
 For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
 Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
 Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.
 What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
 Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?—
 But who is here?—Lysander! on the ground!
 Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
 Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

90

95

100

Lys. And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

[Waking.]

Transparent Helena! Nature here shows art,
 That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
 Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
 Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

105

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so:
 What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
 Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

Lys. Content with Hermia? No: I do repent
 The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
 Not Hermia but Helena now I love:
 Who will not change a raven for a dove?
 The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
 And reason says you are the worthier maid.

110

115

Things growing are not ripe until their season;
 So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
 And touching now the point of human skill,
 Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
 And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
 Love's stories, written in love's richest book. 12c

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
 When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
 Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
 That I did never, no, nor never can
 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye, 125
 But you must flout my insufficiency?
 Good troth, you do me wrong,—good sooth, you do,—
 In such disdainful manner me to woo.
 But fare you well: perforce I must confess,

I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
 O, that a lady of one man refus'd,
 Should of another therefore be abus'd! [Exit.]

Lys. She sees not Hermia:—Hermia, sleep thou there;
 And never may'st thou come Lysander near! 135
 For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things
 The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;
 Or, as the heresies that men do leave
 Are hated most of those they did deceive;
 So thou, my surfeit and my heresy, 140
 Of all be hated, but the most of me!
 And, all my powers, address your love and might
 To honour Helen, and to be her knight! [Exit.]

Her. [starting.] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy best
 To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast! 145
 Ah me, for pity!—what a dream was here!
 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear!
 Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
 And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.—
 Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord! 150
 What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
 Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
 Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
 No?—then I well perceive you are not nigh:
 Either death or you I'll find immediately. [Exit.] 155

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Wood. The Queen of Fairies lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action, as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What say'st thou, bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of *Pyramus and Thisby* that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that? II

Snout. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bot. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed: and for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear. 20

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in, God shield us! a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing: for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to it. 30

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—'Ladies,' or 'Fair ladies! I would wish you, or, I would request you, or, I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble: my life

for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are:—and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 41

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber: for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snug. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanack; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then you may leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement. 51

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure or to present the person of moonshine. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snug. You never can bring in a wall.—What say you, Bottom?

Bot. Some man or other must present wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper. 62

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake; and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind.

Puck. What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here, So near the cradle of the fairy queen?

What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;

An actor too, perhaps, if I see cause. 70

Quin. Speak, Pyramus.—Thisby, stand forth.

Bot. [as Pyr.] Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

Quin. Odours, odours.

Bot. [as Pyr.] —odours savours sweet:

So doth thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.—

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear.

[Exit.

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here!

[Aside.—Exit.

Fu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you: for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. [as This.] *Mostradiant Pyramus, most lily white of hue,
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire,* 85
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. Ninus' tomb, man: why, you must not speak that yet: that you answer to Pyramus. You speak all your part at once, cues and all.—Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is, never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.

Flu. [as This.] *O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.* 91

Bot. [as Pyr.] *If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine:—*

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters!—Help! [Exit Clowns.]

Puck. I'll follow you; I'll lead you about a round, 95

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier; Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [Exit. 100

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [Exit SNOUT. 105

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.

[Exit.]

Bot. I see their knavery; this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [Sings. 110

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The thrush with his note so true,
The wren with little quill.

Tita. What angel wakes me from my flowery bed? 115
[Waking.]

Bot.

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
 The plain-song cuckoo gray,
 Whose note full many a man doth mark,
 And dares not answer, nay;—

119

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry *cuckoo* never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:

Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note.
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
 And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me,
 On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

125

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days: the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

131

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go;
 Thou shalt remain here whether thou wilt or no.
 I am a spirit of no common rate,—
 The summer still doth tend upon my state;
 And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
 I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
 And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
 And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
 And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
 That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.—
 Peasblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

14c

145

Enter Four Fairies.

1 *Fai.* Ready.2 *Fai.* And I.3 *Fai.* And I.4 *Fai.* Where shall we go?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
 Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
 Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
 With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
 The honey bags steal from the humble-bees,
 And, for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
 And light them at the fiery glowworm's eyes,
 To have my love to bed and to arise;
 And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,

150

155

To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes :
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

1 *Fai.* Hail, mortal !

2 *Fai.* Hail !

3 *Fai.* Hail !

4 *Fai.* Hail !

160

Bot. I cry your worship's mercy heartily.—I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb !

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb. If I cut my finger I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman ?

Peas. Peasblossom.

168

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peasblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir ?

Mus. Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well : that same cowardly giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house : I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

Tita. Come, wait upon him ; lead him to my bower.

The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye ; 180
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. {*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Another part of the Wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awak'd ;
Then what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK.

Here comes my messenger.—How now, mad spirit ?
What night-rule now about this haunted grove ?

5

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleep'ng hour,

A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented in their sport,
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake; 15
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nowl I fixed on his head;
Anon, his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky,
So at his sight away his fellows fly:
And at our stamp here o'er and o'er one falls; 25
He *murder* cries, and *help* from Athens calls.
Their sense, thus weak, lost with their fears, thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong:
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats: from yielders all things catch. 30
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment,—so it came to pass,—
Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass.
Obe. This falls out better than I could devise. 35
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?
Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd. 40

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA.

Obe. Stand close; this is the same Athenian.
Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.
Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.
Her. Now I but chide, but I should use thee worse; 45
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in knee-deep,
And kill me too.
The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me: would he have stol'n away

From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
 This whole earth may be bor'd; and that the moon
 May through the centre creep, and so displease
 Her brother's noontide with the antipodes.
 It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
 So should a murderer look; so dead, so grim.

55

Dem. So should the murder'd look; and so should I,
 Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty:
 Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
 As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

60

Her. What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
 Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcase to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the
 bounds

65

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
 Henceforth be never number'd among men!
 Oh! once tell true, tell true, even for my sake;
 Durst thou have look'd upon him, being awake,
 And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!
 Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
 An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
 Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

70

Dem. You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood:
 I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
 Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

75

Her. I pray thee, tell me, then, that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Her. A privilege never to see me more.—
 And from thy hated presence part I so:

80

See me no more whether he be dead or no. [Exit.]

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein:
 Here, therefore, for awhile I will remain.
 So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
 For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;

85

Which now in some light measure it will pay,
 If for his tender here I make some stay. [Lies down.]

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
 And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
 Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
 Some true-love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

90

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
 A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go, swifter than the wind,
 And Helena of Athens look thou find:

95

All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see thou bring her here;
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go: look how I go,—
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.

100
[Exit.

Obe.

Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye!
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.—
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

105

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth mistook by me
Pleading for a lover's fee;
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

110
115

Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one,—
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.

120

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears.

Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.

125

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!

These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath and you will nothing weigh:

130

Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh; and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

135

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [awaking.] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine !
 To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne ?
 Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
 Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow !
 That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
 Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
 When thou hold'st up thy hand : O let me kiss
 This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !

140

Hel. O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent
 To set against me for your merriment.
 If you were civil, and knew courtesy,
 You would not do me thus much injury.
 Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
 But you must join in souls to mock me too ?
 If you were men, as men you are in show,
 You would not use a gentle lady so ;
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia ;
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena :
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
 With your derision ! None of noble sort
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

150

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius ; be not so ;
 For you love Hermia : this you know I know :
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part ;
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
 Whom I do love, and will do to my death.

155

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.
Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :
 If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
 My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
 And now to Helen is it home return'd,
 There to remain.

160

Lys. Helen, it is not so.
Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
 Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.—
 Look where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

170

175

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
 The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;

Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense :—
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

Lys. Why should he stay whom love doth press to go ?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my side ? 180

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,—
Fair Helena,—who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.

Why seek'st thou me ? could not this make thee know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so ?

190

Her. You speak not as you think ; it cannot be.

Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy !

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia ! most ungrateful maid !

195

Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd
To bait me with this foul derision ?

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

200

For parting us,—O, is all forgot ?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence ?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needls created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

Both warbling of one song, both in one key ;

As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted ;

But yet a union in partition,

205

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem :

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.

And will you rent our ancient love asunder,

To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?

It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly :

Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,

Though I alone do feel the injury.

210

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words :

I scorn you not ; it seems that you scorn me.

220

Hel. Have you not sent Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me, and praise my eyes and face ?

And made your other love, Demetrius,—
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,—
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
 To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
 And tender me, forsooth, affection,
 But by your setting on, by your consent?
 What though I be not so in grace as you,
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate;
 But miserable most, to love unlov'd?
 This you should pity, rather than despise.

225

230

235

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.
Hel. Ay, do perséver, counterfeit sad looks,
 Make mows upon me when I turn my back;
 Wink at each other; hold the sweet jest up:
 This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.
 If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
 You would not make me such an argument.
 But, fare ye well: 'tis partly mine own fault;
 Which death, or absence, soon shall remedy.

240

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse;
 My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

245

Hel. O excellent!*Her.* Sweet, do not scorn her so.*Dem.* If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat;
 Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.—
 Helen, I love thee; by my life I do;
 I swear by that which I will lose for thee
 To prove him false that says I love thee not.

251

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.*Lys.* If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

255

Dem. Quick, come,—*Her.* Lysander, whereto tends all this?*Lys.* Away, you Ethiop!

Dem. No, no, sir:—he will
 Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow:
 But yet come not. You are a tame man; go!

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr: vile thing, let loose,
 Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

261

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this,
 Sweet love?

Lys. Thy love? out, tawny Tartar, out!
 Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, 'sooth; and so do you. 265

Lys. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond; for I perceive
A weak bond holds you; I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What! should I hurt her, strike her, kill her
dead?

Although I hate her I'll not harm her so. 270

Her. What! can you do me greater harm than hate?

Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love?

Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me: 275

Why, then, you left me,—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt;
Be certain, nothing's truer, 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena. 280

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! What! have you come by night,
And stol'n my love's heart from him!

Hel. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What! will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet you! 285

Her. Puppet! why so? Ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urg'd her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.—
And are you grown so high in his esteem
Because I am so dwarfish and so low? 290
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me. I was never curst; 300
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice;
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she's something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

*Her.**Lower! hark, again.*

305

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
 I evermore did love you, Hermia;
 Did ever keep your counsels; never wrong'd you;
 Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
 I told him of your stealth unto this wood:
 He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
 But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 To Athens will I bear my folly back,
 And follow you no farther. Let me go:
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?*Hel.* A foolish heart that I leave here behind.*Her.* What! with Lysander?*Hel.*

With Demetrius.

320

Lys. Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena.*Dem.* No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd:
 She was a vixen when she went to school;
 And, though she be but little, she is fierce.
Her. Little again! nothing but *low* and *little!*—
 Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
 Let me come to her.

325

Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
 You minima, of hind'ring knot-grass made;
 You bead, you acorn.

Dem. You are too officious
 In her behalf that scorns your services.
 Let her alone; speak not of Helena;
 Take not her part: for if thou dost intend
 Never so little show of love to her,
 Thou shalt aby it.

330

Lys. Now she holds me not;
 Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
 Or thine or mine, is most in Helena.

335

Dem. Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[Exeunt LYS. and DEM.]

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you;
 Nay, go not back.

Hel. I will not trust you, I;
 Nor longer stay in your curst company.
 Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray;
 My legs are longer though, to run away.

340

[Exit.]

Her. I am amaz'd, and know not what to say.

[*Exit, pursuing HELENA.*

Obe. This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully. 345

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should *know the man*
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes:
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport. 350

Obe. Thou seest these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog, as black as Acheron;
And lead these testy rivals so astray,
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision;
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen, and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace. 370

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast;
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to church-yards: damned spirits all,
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully exile themselves from light,
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night. 375
380
385

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport;
And, like a forester, the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt, green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit OBE. 395]

Puck. Up and down, up and down;
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town;
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one. 400

Enter LYSANDER.

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

Puck. Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,
To plainer ground. [Exit Lys. as following the voice. 410]

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Lysander! speak again.

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled? 405
Speak. In some bush? where dost thou hide thy head?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defiled 410
That draws a sword on thee.

Dem. Yea, art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice; we'll try no manhood here.

[*Exeunt.*]

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. He goes before me, and still dares me on;
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter heeled than I: 415
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. Come, thou gentle day!

[*Lies down.*
For if but once thou show me thy gray light,
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. [Sleeps. 420]

Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho, ho ! ho, ho ! Coward, why com'st thou not ?

Dem. Abide me if thou dar'st ; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place ;
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou ?

Puck. Come hither ; I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear, 425
If ever I thy face by daylight see :
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.—
By day's approach look to be visited.

430 [Lies down and sleeps.

Enter HELENA.

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours ! Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,

From these that my poor company detest :—
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, 435
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

[Sleeps.

Puck. Yet but three ? Come one more ;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad :—
Cupid is a knavish lad, 440
Thus to make poor females mad.

Enter HERMIA.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with briers ;
I can no farther crawl, no farther go ;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires. 445
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heaven shield Lysander, if they mean a fray ! [Lies down.

Puck. On the ground sleep sound :

I'll apply to your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy. 450
[Squeezing the juice on LYSANDER'S eye.
When thou wak'st, thou tak'st
True delight in the sight
Of thy former lady's eye :
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own, 455
In your waking shall be shown :

Jack shall have Jill;
 Nought shall go ill;
 The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well.
 [Exit PUCK.—DEM., HEL., etc., sleep.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Wood.*

Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM, Fairies attending; OBERON behind, unseen.

Tita. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
 And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bot. Where's Peasblossom?

Peas. Ready.

Bot. Scratch my head, Peasblossom.—Where's Monsieur Cobweb?

Cob. Ready.

Bot. Monsieur Cobweb; good monsieur, get your weapons in your hand and kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle; and, good monsieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action, monsieur; and, good monsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you overflowed with a honey-bag, signior.—Where's Monsieur Mustardseed?

Must. Ready.

Bot. Give me your neif, Monsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good monsieur.

Must. What's your will?

Bot. Nothing, good monsieur, but to help Cavalero Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face: and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me I must scratch.

Tita. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bot. I have a reasonable good ear in music: let us have the tongs and the bones.

Tita. Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat.

Bot. Truly, a peck of provender; I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

31

Tita. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts. 33

Bot. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas.
But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me; I have an
exposition of sleep come upon me.

Tita. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms.
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away.
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist,—the female ivy so 40
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee!

[*They sleep.*

OBERON advances. Enter PUCK.

Obe. Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity.
For, meeting her of late behind the wood, 45
Seeking sweet savours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her, and fall out with her:
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds 50
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flow'rets' eyes,
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had, at my pleasure, taunted her,
And she, in mild terms, begg'd my patience, 55
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy-land.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes. 60
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain;
That he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents 65
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be;

[*Touching her eyes with an herb.*

See as thou wast wont to see:

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

70

Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

Tita. My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass ?
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

76

Obe. Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.
Titania, music call ; and strike more dead
Than common sleep, of all these five, the sense.

Tita. Music, ho ! music ; such as charmeth sleep.

80

Puck. Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes
peep.

Obe. Sound, music. [Still music.] Come, my queen, take
hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

85

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair posterity :
There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend and mark ;

90

I do hear the morning lark.

Obe. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after the night's shade :
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wand'ring moon.

95

Tita. Come, my lord ; and in our flight,
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found,
With these mortals on the ground.

[Exeunt.
[Horns sound within.]

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and Train.

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester ;—

100

For now our observation is perform'd ;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds,—
Uncouple in the western valley ; go :—
Despatch, I say, and find the forester.—

105

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear

110

With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear

Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded ; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;
Crook-kneed and dew-lap'd like Thessalian bulls ;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :
Judge when you hear.—But, soft ; what nymphs are these ?

Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep ;
And this Lysander ; this Demetrius is ;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena :
I wonder of their being here together.

The. No doubt, they rose up early to observe
The rite of May ; and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.—
But, speak, Egeus ; is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice ?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

[*Horns, and shout within.* DEM., LYS., HER.,
and HEL., *awake and start up.*

The. Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past ;
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now ?

Lys. Pardon, my lord. [*He and the rest kneel to THESEUS.*

The. I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies ;
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half 'sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here :
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak—
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither : our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might be
Without the peril of the Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough ;
I beg the law, the law upon his head.—
They would have stol'n away, they wished, Demetrius,

115

120

125

130

140

145

150

Thereby to have defeated you and me :
 You of your wife, and me of my consent,—
 Of my consent that she should be your wife.

155

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
 Of this their purpose hither to this wood ;
 And I in fury hither follow'd them,
 Fair Helena in fancy following me.

160

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,—
 But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia
 Melted as doth the snow—seems to me now
 As the remembrance of an idle gawd
 Which in my childhood I did dote upon :
 And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
 The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
 Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
 Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia :
 But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food ;
 But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
 Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,
 And will for evermore be true to it.

165

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :
 Of this discourse we more will hear anon.—
 Egeus, I will overbear your will ;
 For in the temple, by and by with us,
 These couples shall eternally be knit.
 And, for the morning now is something worn,
 Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.—
 Away with us to Athens three and three,
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.—

175

Come, Hippolyta. [Exeunt THE., HIP., EGE., and Train.

Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
 Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

180

Her. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
 When everything seems double.

Hel. So methinks :
 And I have found Demetrius like a jewel.
 Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem. It seems to me
 That yet we sleep, we dream.—Do you not think
 The duke was here, and bid us follow him ?

190

Her. Yea, and my father.

Hel. And Hippolyta.

Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Dem. Why, then, we are awake : let's follow him ;
 And by the way let us recount our dreams.

[Exeunt. 195

As they go out, BOTTOM awakes.

Bot. When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer:—my next is, *Most fair Pyramus*.—Heigh-ho!—Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was.—Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had,—But man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen; man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream; it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.

[*Exit.* 212]

SCENE II.—ATHENS. *A Room in QUINCE'S House.*

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt, he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred; it goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flu. No; he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.

10

Quin. Yea, and the best person too: and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say paragon: a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple; and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward we had all been made men.

17

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence

a-day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a-day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a-day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a-day in Pyramus, or nothing.

22

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quin. Bottom!—O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

29

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together; good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look over his part; for, the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlick; for we are to utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear them say it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go; away!

[*Exeunt.* 40]

A C T V.

SCENE I.—ATHENS. *An Apartment in the Palace of THESEUS.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords and Attendants.

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true. I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

5

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet

Are of imagination all compact :
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold ;
 That is the madman : the lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt :
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
 And, as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear ?

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
 And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
 More witnesseth than fancy's images,
 And grows to something of great constancy ;
 But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.—
 Joy, gentle friends ! joy and fresh days of love
 Accompany your hearts !

Lys. More than to us
 Wait on your royal walks, your board, your bed !
The. Come now ; what masques, what dances shall we have,
 To wear away this long age of three hours
 Between our after-supper and bed-time ?
 Where is our usual manager of mirth ?
 What revels are in hand ? Is there no play,
 To ease the anguish of a torturing hour ?
 Call Philostrate.

Philost. Here, mighty Theseus.
The. Say, what abridgment have you for this evening ?
 What masque ? what music ? How shall we beguile
 The lazy time, if not with some delight ?

Philost. There is a brief how many sports are rife ;
 Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[Giving a paper.
The. [reads.] *The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
 By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.*
 We'll none of that : that I have told my love,
 In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

*The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.*

That is an old device, and it was play'd
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror. 50

*The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceas'd in beggary.*

That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony. 55

*A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus,
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.*

Merry and tragical ! tedious and brief !
That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow. 60

How shall we find the concord of this discord ?
Philost. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play ;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,

Which makes it tedious : for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted : 65

And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself :

Which when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears

The passion of loud laughter never shed. 70

The. What are they that do play it ?

Philost. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labour'd in their minds till now ;
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories
With this same play against your nuptial. 75

The. And we will hear it.

Philost. No, my noble lord,
It is not for you : I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world ;
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretch'd, and conn'd with cruel pain, 80
To do you service.

The. I will hear that play ;
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[Exit PHILOSTRATE.]

Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged, 85
And duty in his service perishing.

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for *nothing*.

Our sport shall be to take what they mistake : 90
 And what poor duty cannot do,
 Noble respect takes it in might, not merit.
 Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
 To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;
 Where I have seen them shiver and look pale, 95
 Make periods in the midst of sentences,
 Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears,
 And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
 Not paying me a welcome Trust me, sweet,
 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ; 100
 And in the modesty of fearful duty
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
 In least speak most to my capacity. 105

Enter PHILOSTRADE.

Philost. So please your grace, the prologue is address'd.
The. Let him approach. [Flourish of trumpets.

Enter PETER QUINCE [as Prologue].

Quin. [as Prol.] If we offend, it is with our good will. 110
 That you should think we come not to offend
 But with good will. To show our simple skill,
 That is the true beginning of our end.
 Consider, then, we come but in despite.
 We do not come as minding to content you.
 Our true intent is. All for your delight
 We are not here. That you should here repent you. 115
 The actors are at hand : and, by their show,
 You shall know all that you are like to know.

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ; he knows
 not the stop. A good moral, my lord : it is not enough to
 speak, but to speak true. 121

Hip. Indeed he hath played on this prologue like a child
 on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain ; nothing im-
 paired, but all disordered. Who is next ? 125

*Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION, as in
 dumb show.*

Quin. [as Prol.] Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;
 But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
 This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;
 This beauteous lady Thisby is, certāin.
 This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 130
 Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder :
 And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
 To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine : for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo. 135
This grisly beast, which by name's Lion hight,
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright:
And as she fled, her mantle she did fall; 140
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain :
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth, and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :
Whereat with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast; 145
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse while here they do remain. 150

[Exeunt Prol., THIS., LION, and MOON.]

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many
asses do.

Snout [as Wall]. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall: 155
And such a wall as I would have you think
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show 160
That I am that same wall; the truth is so :
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse,
my lord. 166

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Enter BOTTOM [as PYRAMUS].

Bot. [as Pyr.] O grim-look'd night ! O night with hue so black !
O night, which ever art when day is not !
O night, O night, alack, alack, alack, 170
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot !—
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine;
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne. 175

[SNOUT [as WALL] holds up his fingers.]

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this !

But what see I ? No Thisby do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss;

Curst be thy stones for thus deceiving me ! 179

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Bot. [as Pyr.] No, in truth, sir, he should not. *Deceiving me* is Thisby's
cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see it
will fall pat as I told you.—Yonder she comes.

Enter FLUTE [as THISBE].

Flu. [as This.] O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
For parting my fair Pyramus and me:

My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones:
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

Bot. [as Pyr.] I see a voice: now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.
Thisby!

Flu. [as This.] My love! thou art my love, I think.

Bot. [as Pyr.] Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace;
And like Limander am I trusty still.

Flu. [as This.] And I like Helen, till the fates me kill.

Bot. [as Pyr.] Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true.

Flu. [as This.] As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Bot. [as Pyr.] O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.

Flu. [as This.] I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Bot. [as Pyr.] Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

Flu. [as This.] Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

Snout [as Wall]. Thus have I, wall, my part discharged so;

And, being done, thus wall away doth go.

[*Exeunt WALL, PYR., and THIS.*]

The. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

Dem. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to
hear without warning.

Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The. The best in this kind are but shadows; and the
worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

The. If we imagine no worse of them than they of them-
selves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two
noble beasts in, a moon and a lion.

211

Enter SNUG [as LION], and STARVELING [as MOONSHINE].

Snug [as Lion]. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear

The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now, perchance, both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.

Then know that I, one Snug, the joiner, am

A lion fell, nor else no lion's dam:

For if I should as lion come in strife

Into this place, 'twere pity of my life.

215

The. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

220

Dem. The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I saw.

Lys. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

The. True; and a goose for his discretion.

Dem. Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry his
discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

225

The. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour;
for the goose carries not the fox. It is well: leave it to his
discretion, and let us hearken to the moon.

Star. [as Moon.] This lantern doth the horned moon present:

Dem. He should have worn the horns on his head. 230

The. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

Star. [as Moon.] This lantern doth the horned moon present ;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.

The. This is the greatest error of all the rest : the man should be put into the lantern. How is it else *the man i' the moon ?*

Dem. He dares not come there for the candle : for, you see, it is already in snuff. 239

Hip. I am weary of this moon ; would he would change !

The. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane : but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lys. Proceed, moon.

Star. [as Moon.] All that I have to say, is to tell you that the lantern is the moon ; I, the man in the moon ; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog. 247

Dem. Why, all these should be in the lantern ; for all these are in the moon. But, silence ; here comes Thisbe.

Enter FLUTE [as THISBE].

Flu. [as This.] This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love ?

Snug [as Lion]. Oh ! [The LION roars.—THISBE runs off.]

Dem. Well roared, lion.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, moon.—Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. 255

The. Well moused, lion.

[The LION tears THISBE's mantle, and exit.]

Dem. And so comes Pyramus.

Lys. And then the lion vanishes.

Enter BOTTOM [as PYRAMUS].

Bot. [as Pyr.] Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams ;

I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright :
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering streams,
I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.

But stay ;—O spite !
But mark,—poor knight,
What dreadful dole is here !
Eyes, do you see ?
How can it be ?
O dainty duck ! O dear !
Thy mantle good,
What ! stained with blood ?

260

265

270

Approach, ye furies fell !
 O fates ! come, come ;
 Cut thread and thrum ;
 Quail, rush, conclude, and quell !

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would
 go near to make a man look sad. 276

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Bot. [as Pyr.] O wherefore, nature, didst thou lions frame ?
 Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear :
 Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
 That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer. 280

Come, tears, confound ;
 Out, sword, and wound
 The pap of Pyramus :
 Ay, that left pap,
 Where heart doth hop :—
 Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
 Now am I dead,
 Now am I fled ;
 My soul is in the sky :
 Tongue, lose thy light !
 Moon, take thy flight !
 Now die, die, die, die, die. 285

[*Dies.—Exit MOONSHINE.*

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him ; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man ; for he is dead ; he is nothing.

The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover and
 prove an ass. 297

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes
 back and finds her lover ?

The. She will find him by starlight.—Here she comes ;
 and her passion ends the play.

Enter FLUTE [as THISBE].

Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a
 Pyramus : I hope she will be brief. 303

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which
 Thisbe, is the better.

Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she moans, *videlicet*.—

Flu. [as This.] Asleep, my love ?
 What, dead, my dove ?
 O Pyramus, arise,
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb ?
 Dead, dead ? A tomb
 Must cover thy sweet eyes.
 These lily brows,
 This cherry nose,
 These yellow cowslip cheeks,
 Are gone, are gone
 Lovers, make moan !
 His eyes were green as leeks. 310
 315

O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:—
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue:
And farewell, friends:—
Thus Thisby ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu.

320

325

330
[Dies.]

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. [rising.] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers.
Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between
two of our company.

336

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no
excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead
there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had
played Pyramus, and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it
would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very
notably discharged. But come, your Bergomask: let your
epilogue alone.

[Here a dance of Clowns.]

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:—

Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

345

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,
As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd

The heavy gait of night.—Sweet friends, to bed.—

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
In nightly revels and new jollity.

350

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,

5

Whilst the scritch-owl, scritchling loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth its sprite,
 In the church-way paths to glide:
 And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team,
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic: not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
 I am sent with broom before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door. 20

Enter OBERON and TITANIA, with their Train.

- Obe.* Through this house give glimmering light,
 By the dead and drowsy fire:
 Every elf and fairy sprite,
 Hop as light as bird from brier;
 And this ditty, after me,
 Sing and dance it trippingly. 25
- Tita.* First, rehearse your song by rote,
 To each word a warbling note.
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
 Will we sing, and bless this place. 30

SONG AND DANCE.

- Obe.* Now, until the break of day,
 Through this house each fairy stray.
 To the best bride-bed will we,
 Which by us shall blessed be;
 And the issue there create
 Ever shall be fortunate. 35
- So shall all the couples three
 Ever true in loving be:
 And the blots of Nature's hand
 Shall not in their issue stand;
 Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despised in nativity,
 Shall upon their children be.—
 With this field-dew consecrate, 40
- Every fairy take his gate;
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace with sweet peace;

E'er shall it in safety rest,
And the owner of it blest.

50

Trip away:

Make no stay:

Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt OBE., TITA., and Train.*

Puck.

If we shadows have offended,

55

Think but this—and all is mended—

That you have but slumber'd here

While these visions did appear.

And this weak and idle theme,

No more yielding but a dream,

Gentles, do not reprehend;

60

If you pardon, we will mend.

And, as I'm an honest Puck,

If we have unearned luck

Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,

65

We will make amends ere long;

Else the Puck a liar call:

So good-night unto you all.

Give me your hands, if we be friends,

And Robin shall restore amends.

[*Exit.*

N O T E S.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

Athens, the capital of Attica, and one of the most famous of the cities of antiquity for learning and the liberal arts, was situated about four miles from the sea, between the small rivers Cephissus on the west, and the Ilissus, which flowed through part of the town, on the east. Though the most ancient part of it, the Acropolis, was said to have been built by the mythical Cecrops, the city itself was held to have owed its origin to Theseus, who united the twelve independent townships of Attica into one state, and made Athens the chief city of the confederation. The Acropolis was a steep rock in the middle of the city, 150 feet high, 1150 feet long, and 500 broad. To this, access was attainable only on the west, and here the noblest temples were raised. Round this upper city the lower city was built. Connected with it by long walls were the three harbour-towns—Piræus, Munychia, and Phalerum. It was latterly encircled by about twenty-two miles of wall; but in its early period, when Theseus held sway in it, it could scarcely have attained high splendour or much population.

2. *Four happy days bring in another moon.* On this passage the Rev. Joseph Hunter remarks: ‘However graceful is the opening of this play, and however pleasing these lines may be, they exhibit proof that Shakespeare, like Homer, may sometimes slumber; for, as the old moon had still four nights to run, it is quite clear that at the time Hippolyta speaks of, there could be no moon, either full-orbed or “like to a silver bow,” to beam on their solemnities, or to make up for the deficient properties of those who were to represent Pyramus and Thisbe by moonlight at the tomb of Ninus’—*New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 287. In his strictures, however, the critic seems to have forgotten how accommodating the moon is, in poetry, and especially in the poetry of dreams. Why should Shakespeare, and his readers too, not ‘slumber’ and enjoy the sweet privilege of having the moon arranged to suit the prospects and hopes of the future in ‘a midsummer night’s dream?’

4. *Lingers*—postpones, hinders the gratification of.
 4-6. *She lingers my desires . . . revenues.* [Peter] Whalley [A. B., in *An Inquiry into the Learning of Shakespeare* (1748)], we believe, was the first who pointed out the similarity between the opening speech of Theseus and the following passage in the *Epistles of Horace*:

“Ut piger annus
Pupillis, quos dura premit custodia matrum;
Sic mihi tarda fluunt ingrata tempora”—I, i, 21-23.

“Slowe seemes the yeare unto the ward
Which houlden must be,
In custodie of step-dame straite;
Slowe slides the time with me”;

—Thomas Drant's *Horace* (1567).

—J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. 17.

5. *Step-dame or a dowager.* The word *dowager*, as Mr Knight observes, is here used in the original sense of a widow receiving *dower* out of the revenue which has descended to the heir with this customary charge. Slender in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I, i, 282, alludes to this custom: ‘I keep but three men and a boy [as] yet, till my mother be dead.’ Step-dames were, indeed, seldom looked upon by the youths under their care with any degree of affection; their severity is thus mentioned by Barnefield, in his *Complaint of Poetrie* (1598):

‘Then if a stony heart must thee inter,
Go find a step-dame or a usurer.’

- 7-11. *Four days . . . solemnities.* Karl Elze says that the late Herman Kurz, on searching the old *Ephemerides*, found that they all agreed in stating that on April 30, 1590, there was a new moon—*Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 64; but J. C. Adams, Lowndes Professor of Astronomy, Cambridge, informed Mr W. A. Wright that ‘the nearest new moon to May 1st, 1590, was April 23d [Shakespeare's twenty-seventh birthday], and that there was a new moon on May 1st, 1592.’

13. *Pert*—not, as now, saucy, talkative, but quick, lively, subtle. Skinner derives it from French *appert*, from Latin *ad pertus*, skilful, prompt; in Welsh the word *pert* signifies *smart spruce, trim, handsome, elegant*.

15. *The pale companion*—the moon, which Shakespeare in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV, ii, 100, calls ‘this pale queen of night,’ and in *Henry IV*, I, iv, 202, ‘the pale-faced moon.’ But an anonymous critic, quoted by Dr Z. Grey in his *Notes on Shakespeare*, i, p. 41, proposes to read ‘that pale companion’ as a periphrasis for Melancholy (line 14).

19. *Triumph*—from Greek *θραύψος*, a procession in honour of Bacchus, transferred to the solemn and magnificent entrance

of a general into Rome, after having obtained an important victory, and here applied to any 'high, great, and statelie dooings,' such as a mask, pageant, or procession.

20. *Duke*—like the Latin *dux*, leader, chief, commander. So in:

‘Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a *duk* that highte Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,’ etc.
—Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, i. 3.

33. *Gawds*—from Latin *guadium*, joy, or that which produces joy; baubles, toys, trifles, etc. See IV, i, 172.

39. *Be it so*—equal to ‘if it be so that.’

- 41-43. *I beg . . . death.* The laws of Solon, B.C. 638-558, gave fathers the power of life and death over their children; but it is not likely this ‘ancient privilege’ existed in Theseus’ Athens.

45. *Immediately provided in that case.* ‘Shakespeare,’ Steevens says, ‘is grievously suspected of having been placed, while a boy, in an attorney’s office. The line before us has an undoubted smack of legal commonplace. Poetry disclaims it.’ ‘The precise formula, *In such case made and provided*, would not have stood in the verse. There is certainly no nearer approach in heroic measure to the technical language of an indictment; and there seems no motive for the addition made to the preceding line, except to show a familiarity with legal phraseology, which Shakespeare, whether he ever was an attorney’s clerk or not, is constantly fond of displaying’ —Lord Campbell’s *Shakespeare’s Legal Acquirements*, p. 48.

53. *In himself*—like the Latin *per se*, absolutely, without taking into consideration his relations.

65. *Die the death.* See Matt. xv, 4; *Measure for Measure*, II, iv, 165; *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 96.

70. *Livery*—distinctive dress. See *Pericles*, II, v, 10; III, iv, 10.

- 70, 71. *Nun . . . in shady cloister.* Here Shakespeare uses the language of mediæval Christianity as more easily understood than allusions to the Greek worshippers of the maiden-divinity, Artemis. North (quoted *ante*, p. 15) employs ‘nun’ with the same license.

75. *Pilgrimage*—course of life. *Gen.* xlvi, 9.

75. *Earthlier-happy*—more earthly happy. For similar comparatives of adverbs, see *goodlier* (*Tempest*, I, ii, 416), *wiselier* (II, i, 21). Grant White says *earthly* is a good adjective, and *earthlier* is its proper comparative. Capell altered the form to *earthly-happier*, which Dyce characterises as ‘a more correct expression doubtless; but Shakespeare,’ he adds, ‘like his contemporaries, did not always write correctly.’ The Rev. Joseph Hunter takes the following exceptions to Capell’s suggestion: ‘(1) That it is against authority; (2) that nothing is gained by it; (3) that if there is any difference in meaning,

it is a deterioration, and not an improvement ; and (4) that it spoils the melody ;' and he explains the passage thus : 'The virgin is thrice-blessed as respects the heaven for which she prepares herself ; but looking only to the present world, the other is the happier lot'—*New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 288. Milton uses an exactly similar phrase :

‘And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endueth’
—*Sonnets*, vii, 6, 7.

It might have been as a protest against the doctrine of Theseus so complimentary to Queen Elizabeth, that Robert Southwell, in his *Address to the Christian Reader of Short Rules of Good Life* (1592?), says :

‘Heavenly-happy is that soule
Takes Virtue for her guide.’

- 80. *Virgin patent*—exclusive right of possession and use.
- 81. *Lordship*—dominion, authority, rule, government. That the word *dominion* in our present translation of the Bible, *Rom.* vii, 1, is *lordship* in Wicliffe's version, has been pointed out by Charles Knight.
- 92. *Crazed*—weak, feeble. Compare ‘crazed health’—*Faerie Queene*, III, ix, 26, and thence unreasonable.
- 97, 98. *All my right of her I do estate unto*. Another legal phrase, for pass over to and settle upon in perpetuity. See :

‘A contract of true love to celebrate ;
And some donation to estate
On the blest lovers’—*The Tempest*, IV, i, 84-86. .

- 110. *Spotted*. ‘As spotless is innocent ; so spotted is wicked’—DR JOHNSON. *Richard II*, III, ii, 135; *Titus Andronicus*, II, iii, 74.
- 113. *Self-affairs*—business affecting myself. Shakespeare uses no fewer than forty-five compounds with *self*.
- 120. *Exteনuate*—weaken, make little of, relax.
- 123. *Go along* [with me]. For *go* we should now use *come*.
- 127. W. A. Wright, M.A., notes that ‘it was a strange oversight on the part of Egeus to leave his daughter with Lysander.’
- 130. *Belike*—it is likely, perhaps.
- 132. *Ah me!* In the Second Folio this is given as *Hermia*. This is perhaps only an actor's substitution ; but in good hands it might be made specially effective.
- 134. This line, in Elizabeth's time, when the queen sought to prevent the marriage of her courtiers and favourites, and often punished those who married without her consent asked and given, must have had a peculiar force and applicability.
- 134-149. *The course of true love . . . confusion*. In Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, the queen of love prophesies that :

- ' Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend :
 It shall be waited on with jealousy ;
 Find sweet beginning with unsavoury end ;
 Ne'er settled equally to high or low ;
 That all Love's pleasures shall not match his woe .
- ' It shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud ;
 And shall be blasted in a breathing while ;
 The bottom poison, and the top o'erstrewed
 With sweets, that shall the sharpest sight beguile .
 The strongest body shall it make most weak ;
 Strike the wise dumb, and teach the fool to speak .
- ' It shall be sparing, and too full of riot,
 Teaching decrepit age to tread the measures :
 The staring ruffian shall it keep in quiet,
 Pluck down the rich, enrich the poor with treasures ;
 It shall be raging mad, and silly mild,
 Make the young old, the old become a child .
- ' It shall suspect where is no cause of fear ;
 It shall not fear where it should most mistrust ;
 It shall be merciful and too severe ;
 And most deceiving when it seems most just ;
 Perverse it shall be where it shows most toward,
 Put fear to valour, courage to the coward .
- ' It shall be cause of war and dire events,
 And set dissension 'twixt the son and sire ;
 Subject and servile to all discontents,
 As dry combustious matter is to fire :
 Sith in his prime death doth my love destroy,
 They that love best, their loves shall not enjoy .—Verses 191-195.

Milton echoes the sentiment in Adam's complaint against the creation of woman in *Paradise Lost* :

' This mischief had not then besallen,
 And more that shall befall ; innumerable
 Disturbances on earth, through female snares,
 And straight conjunction with this sex ; for either
 He never shall find out fit mate, but such
 As some misfortune brings him, or mistake ;
 Or whom he wishes most shall seldom gain,
 Through her perverseness, but shall see her gained
 By a far worse ; or, if she love, withheld
 By parents ; or his happiest choice too late
 Shall meet, already linked and wedlocked-bound
 To a fell adversary, his hate or shame :
 Which infinite calamity shall cause
 To human life, and household peace confound '—x, 895-908.

143. *Momentary*. The quarto gives *momentany*, from *momentaneus*, of brief duration ; while *momentary*, which the Folio 1623 reads, is from *momentarius*, quick. We now use *instantaneous* and *momentary* for greater distinctness of form.
146. *Spleen*—hasty outburst of wrath. So in *King John*, II, i, 448, IV, iii, 97, and V, vii, 50; 3 *Henry VI*, II, i, 124; and *Richard III*, V, iii, 350; and in verses prefixed to the *English Parnassus*, by Joshua Poole of Clare Hall, Cambridge (1657) :

'Like winter fires, that with disdainful heat
 'The opposition of the cold defeat;
 And in an angry *spleen* do burn more fair
 'The more encountered by the frosty air.'

Robin Goodfellow, in *Grim, the Collier of Croydon* (1599?), complains of Mistress Marian that on

'The very first day in her angry *spleen*
 Her nimble hand began to greet my ears
 With such unkind salutes as I ne'er felt'—III, i, 57.

154. *Cross*—trial. *Matt.* x, 38.

155. *Fancy's followers*—those who follow where love leads the way. *Fancy* is here used in the old sense of *love*, as it is also in II, ii, 105; III, ii, 96; IV, i, 160. In *Henry Willolie his Avisa; or, The Picture of a Modest Maide and a Chaste Wife* (1594), we have this usage illustrated thus:

'Would God I could restraine my *love*,
 Sith you to love me cannot yield;
 But I, alas, cannot remove
 My *fancy*, though I die in field;
 My life doth on your love depend,
 My love and life at once must end'—Canto lxiii.

- 163-165. *If thou lov'st me . . . town.* This is plainly a reminiscence from Golding's *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. See ante, p. 22.

164. *Forth*—from, out of.

167. *To do observance to a morn of May.* In this line Shakespeare seems to indicate the connection between his dream-drama and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* by linking it to two exquisite passages in his great predecessor's poem, which are quoted in the Introduction, ante, p. 15. 'May-day is a word which used to awaken in the minds of our ancestors all the ideas of youth, and verdure, and blossoming, and love, and hilarity; in short, the union of the two best things in the world—the love of nature, and the love of each other. It was the day on which the arrival of the year at maturity was kept, like that of a blooming heiress. They caught her eye as she was coming, and sent up hundreds of songs of joy.' See Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*—'May;' Milton's *Ode to May Morning*, etc. 'All the worship of May is over now. There is no issuing forth, in glad companies, to gather boughs; no adorning of houses with the flowery spoil; no songs, no dances, no village sports and coronations; no courtly poetries; no sense and acknowledgement of the quiet presence of nature in grove or glade' [or gladnessomeness of love in common joys, enjoyed together]—Leigh Hunt's *Indicator*, No. xxv.

170. *By his best arrow*, etc. The allusion here is to Cupid's two arrows noted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

'Eque sagittiferā prompsit duo tela pharetrā
 Diversorum operum : fugat hoc, facit illud amorem.
 Quod facit auratum est, et cuspide fulget acutā;
 Quod fugat, obtusum est, et habet sub arundine plumbum,' etc.
 —I, 469-472.

'Then from his quiver, full of shaftes, two arrowes did he take
 Of sundrie works : t' one causeth love, the other doth it shake.
 That causeth love is alle of gold, with pointe full sharpe and bright ;
 That chaseth love is blunt, whose steele with leaden head is dight'
 —Golding's translation, folio 8*b*, 1603.

In *England's Parnassus*, p. 177 (1600), we find the following lines by George Peele (died 1598?), quoted under the heading 'Love.' See Dyce's *Greene and Peele*, p. 603.

'At Venus' entreaty for Cupid her son,
 These arrows by Vulcan were cunningly done ;
 The first is Love, as here you may behold,
 His feathers, head, and body are of gold ;
 The second shaft is Hate, a foe to Love,
 And bitter are his torments for to prove ;
 The third is Hope, from whence our comfort springs,
 His feathers are pull'd from Fortune's wings ;
 Fourth, Jealousy, in basest minds doth dwell,
 His metal Vulcan's Cyclops sent from hell.'

171. *Venus' doves*. The 'Cythereiadasque columbas' of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xv, 386. So 'Venus' pigeons,' *Merchant of Venice*, II, vi, 5. Also :

'I met her deity
 Cutting the clouds towards Paphos, and her son
 Dove-drawn with her'—*Tempest*, IV, i, 94.

- 171, 172. S. W. Singer judiciously transposes these two lines, and reads :

'By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves ;
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves.'

173. *Carthage*. The name is here used adjectively for *Carthaginian*. The allusion made is to the exquisitely-told story of the suicide of Dido when Æneas forsook her, which imparts such interest to Virgil's *Aeneid*, book iv. 'Shakespeare,' says Singer, 'forgot that Theseus performed his exploits before the Trojan war, and consequently long before the death of Dido.' But the chronology of a *Dream* is seldom very precise.

180. *God-speed*—good speed or success. In Anglo-Saxon *gōd-spēdig* means prosperous. 2 *John* 10, 11.

183. *Lode-stars*—leading or guiding-stars, pole-stars. Two well-known constellations in the northern hemisphere of the sky—*Ursa Major* and *Ursa Minor*—always contain in them those conspicuous stars nearest to the north pole, by which navigators direct their course.

- Ib.* Your tongue's sweet air [is] more tuneable, etc. Here, as in

- many places elsewhere, Shakespeare, in similar elliptical sentences, makes the plural verb in the earlier clause serve for the singular verb in the second one.
- 186-189. *Catching*—contagious, infectious; 187, *catch*, take and keep; 188, 189, *catch*, take to myself and reproduce. In the early quartos 186 reads, ‘Your words I catch;’ this the Second Folio altered to ‘Your words I’d catch.’ Sir Thomas Hamner, in his Oxford edition (1744-46), amended to the received reading as in the text.
191. *Translated*—changed, transformed. See also III, i, 106, ii, 32.
- 209-211. *To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold . . . bladed grass.* ‘Shakespeare has a little forgot himself. It appears from I, i, 2, that to-morrow night would be within three nights of the new moon, when there is no moonshine at all, much less at deep midnight (I, i, 223). The same oversight occurs in III, i, 48-51’—SIR WILLIAM BLACKSTONE.
211. This line has been beautifully adopted by Milton, when he says Morn ‘sowed the earth with orient pearl’—*Paradise Lost*, v, 2.
216. *Sweet.* The quartos read ‘sweld,’ but Theobald conjectured *sweet*, which Heath supports by quoting *Ps.* iv, 14.
218. *Stranger companies.* Theobald’s conjecture for the quarto reading ‘strange companions.’
231. *So I, admiring of his qualities [err also].*
232. *Quantity*—a term of the scholastic logic, signifying proper distinction of greater and less; relative proportion. *Quantity* is an *accident* of things, not an *essential* of them.
233. *Form* is also a scholastic term. ‘*Form* is the essence of a thing from which all its other qualities result, and on which all its accidents depend, especially their dignity or importance.’
242. *Eyne*—the Old English plural of *eye*, like *ox*, *oxen*, etc.

SCENE II.

2. *Generally*—used for *severally*.
3. *Scrip*—for script, as in *manuscript*, written list. *Scrip* is a sort of knapsack—I Sam. xvii, 40; Matt. x, 10.
4. 15. *Scroll*—probably used for *roll*, list of names. *Scroll* is a written volume rolled up on rods at the two ends. Isa. xxxiv, 4.
9. *Grow on to a point*—bring the business to an end.
- 11, 12. *Our play is . . . Pyramus and Thisbe.* Shakespeare burlesques the theatrical titles of the plays of his day, e.g. Thomas Preston’s *A Lamentable Tragedy mixed full of pleasant mirth, containing the Life of Cambyses, King of Persia*. It was a happy thought of the poet, in introducing the play within the play, got up by the Athenian mechanicals ‘in honour of Duke Theseus’s marriage, to make a travesty of

the old tragic legend of Pyramus and Thisbe, and thereby turning it, as it were, into a farce upon the serious and pathetic scenes which occur between the lovers in the piece, Demetrius and Helena, Lysander and Hermia'—*Shakespeare Characters*, by C. Cowden Clarke (1863), p. 97.

21. *Ask*—require, need, demand.
 23. *Condole*—stir to grief; *condoling*, grief-stirring.
 24-33. In the First Folio (1623) this is printed in prose, and apparently purposely, wrongly pointed, thus: 'I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split the raging rocks ; and shivering shocks shall break the locks of prison gates, and Phibus' carre shall shine from farre, and make and marre the foolish fates.'
 24. *I could play Ercles rarely.* In Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), the player says to Roberto: 'The twelve labours of Hercules have I terribly thundered on the stage'—Published under the editorship of Dr C. M. Ingleby, in *Shakespeare Allusion Books*, part i, p. 23, l. 29. There was a play—which is not now extant—entitled *Hercules*, produced by Martin Slaughter (?) in 1594. Perhaps Shakespeare had a hit at this production ; but we rather fancy his reference is to John Studley's version of Seneca's *Hercules* (1581), of which the following are some of the earlier lines :

'Oh, Lorde of Ghoasts, whose fyrye flashe
 That forth thy hande doth shake,
 Doth cause the trembling lodges twayne
 Of Phæbus' carre to shake [quake!],
 Rayne reachlesse nowe ; in every place
 Thy peace procurde I have,
 Aloffe where Nereus looks uplande,
 Empalde in winding wave.'

The roring rocks have quaking sturde,
 And non therat hath pusht ;
Hell gloomy gates I have brust oape,
 Where grisly ghoasts alle hushte
 Have stood,' etc.

—Quoted in J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1841), p. 22.

25. *Tear a cat.* Halliwell interprets to 'rant violently in.' In *Histrionastix ; or, the Player Whipt* (1610), some soldiers drag in a company of players, and the captain addresses one of them: 'Sirrah, this is you that would rend and *tear a cat* upon the stage !' In *The Roaring Girl*, by Middleton and Dekker, there is a rough female character, who boasts: 'Ruffling *Tear-cat* is my name, and a ruffler is my style, my title, my profession'—*Dodsley's Old Plays* (1826), vol. vi, p. 90.
 Ib. *To make all split*—to knock to shivers, to astonish people mightily, and take them by surprise. In Chapman's *Widow's*

Tears (1612), Tharsalio says : ‘Her wit I must employ upon this business, to prepare my next encounter, but in such a fashion as shall make all split’—*Dodsley’s Old Plays* (1826), vol. vi, p. 134. In Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Scornful Lady*, young Loveless speaks of Nero and Caligula as ‘two roaring boys of Rome that made all split’—II, iii, 130.

46. *Thisne, thisne.* ‘It may be questioned whether the true reading is not “thisne, thisne,” that is, *in this manner*, a meaning which “thissen” has in several dialects. See Halliwell’s *Archaic Dictionary* [vol. ii, p. 865]. “So-ne” is used in the same way in Suffolk’—*Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 273.
76. *A proper man*—a handsome person. See *Heb.* ix, 23, and the *Merchant of Venice*, I, ii, 63.
92. *Properties*—things required for the use of the performers while acting a piece. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV, iv, 78.
95. *Obscenely.* Shakespeare knew how common it is for persons of high conceit and little learning to miscall their words, and hence he makes his uppish vulgar—like Mrs Malaprop of a later age—‘indulge in a nice derangement of epitaphs.’ ‘He here uses the word *obscenely* for *obscurely*,’ J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps thinks ; but perhaps a joke is intended for unstately, privately. The over-bashful scholar, *Katalectus*, in Thomas Randolph’s *The Muses’ Looking-Glass* (1638), explains, ‘Obscoenum est quod intra scenam agi non oportuit’ (‘That is obscene which is not fit to be represented on the scene’).
97. *Hold or cut bow-strings*—keep tryst, or let friendship henceforth cease.
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ACT II.—SCENE I.

- 8, 9. *I serve the green.* ‘Almost every meadow exhibits specimens of fairy circles, which are ringlets of grass, higher, sourer, and of a deeper green than the grass immediately surrounding them ; their description in the *Tempest* (V, i, 38) as “green-sour ringlets, whereof the ewe bites not,” is founded on extreme accuracy of remark. The midnight frolics of the fairies parched up the grass whereon they danced, and the luxuriant verdure of their orbs was the effect of their care to repair the injury they had caused by refreshing them with moisture, an office [here] assigned to one of Titania’s attendants. . . . As the power of the magician was absolute within his circle, so was the fairy irresistible within her ring. It was thought dangerous for cattle to encroach on her boundaries, and when the damsels of old

gathered dew from the grass for the improvement of their complexions, they left undisturbed such as they perceived on fairy rings, apprehensive that by subjecting themselves to their power, the fairies would maliciously destroy their beauty'—*The Life of Shakespeare*, by Augustine Skottowe, vol. i, pp. 262, 263.

10. *Cowslip*—a fragrant sort of primrose. See V, i, 316. So Bacon mentions among April flowers, 'cowslips, flower-delises, and lillies of all natures'—*Essays*, lvi, *Of Gardens*.

- Ib.* *Cowslips tall*, etc. 'The passage has reference to the band of gentlemen-pensioners, in which Elizabeth took such pride. They were some of the handsomest and *tallest* young men of the best families and fortunes, and their dress of remarkable splendour; their coats might well be said to be of gold. Mrs Quickly's notice of them, as among the suitors of Mrs Ford, will be remembered: "And yet there has been earls, nay, what is more, pensioners." Mr Collier's objection that cowslips are never tall [he would read *all*] is a strange one. Drayton in his *Nymphidia*, thought otherwise, and surely a long-stalked cowslip would be well designated by a *fairy* as tall. Thus Drayton:

"For the queen a fitting tower,
Quoth he, is that fair cowslip flower,
The tallest there that growtheth"

—S. W. SINGER.

15. *Hang a pearl*, etc. 'In an old comedy called *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypole*, first printed in 1600, but known to have been written as early as 1596, occurs a passage which is conjectured by Steevens to have been borrowed from this one:

"Twas I that lead you through the painted meades,
Where the light fairies daunst upon the flowers
Hanging on every leaf an orient pearle,
Which strooke together with the silken wind
Of their loose mantels, made a silver chime"

—J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. 10.

16. *Lob*—a clownish, clumsy, or ungainly person. Compare *looby*, *lubber*, *lubbard*, *lubberkin*, etc., but Thomas Keightley suggests that it may have a sense the very opposite of the present one of lubber, and have been connected with the verb to *leap*. In Anglo-Saxon *lobbe* is a spider, and *loppe*, a flea.

23. *Changeling*. See also II, ii, 61, IV, i, 56. 'Alluding to the opinion of nurses who are wont to say, that the fayries used to steale the fairest children out of their cradles, and put other ill-favoured ones in their places, which they call *changelings* or *elfs*'—Puttenham's *Arte of Poesie* (1589), p. 144. To this notion Shakespeare refers, I *Henry IV*, I, i, 86-90. Spenser gives the same explanation:

'From thence a fairy thee, unweeting, left
 There as thou sleep'st in tender swaddling band,
 And her base elfin brood there for thee left;
 Such, men do changelings call, so changed by fairy theft.'

25. *Train*—band of followers. *Trace*—traverse, wander through.
 30. *Square*—(1) try to set things to rights; (2) quarrel. 'Glaziers use the words *square* and *quarrel* as synonymous terms for a pane of glass'—SIR WM. BLACKSTONE. 'The French *quarré*, square, very nearly resembles *quarrel*.
 34. *Are you not he?* In a passage in Thomas Nash's *The Terrors of the Night; or, A Discourse on Apparitions* (1594), the contents of this play seem to be pretty clearly referred to. It runs thus: 'The Robin Goodfellowes, elfes, fairies, hobgoblins of our later age, which idolatrous former daies, and the phantastical world of Greece ycleped fawns, satyres, dryades, and hamadryades, did most of their merry pranks in the night. Then ground they mault, and had hempen shirts for their labour, daunst in grene meadows, pincht maids in their sleepe that swept not their houses cleane, and led poor travellers out of their way notoriously'—Quoted in J. O. Halliwell-Phillips' *Illustrations of the Fairy Mythology of a Midsummer Night's Dream*, Introduction, p. xvi.
 36-39. *Fright*, *skim*, *labour*, *make*, and *mislead*, ought properly to have been in the third person, agreeing with 'he that,' but for the sake of smoothness of rhythm, they are brought into grammatical relation with *you*.
 36. *Quern*. A quern is a small handmill formerly used in the grinding of malt and flour, but especially the former. It consisted of two circular, flat stones, the upper one pierced in the centre with a narrow funnel, and revolving on a wooden or metal pin inserted in the lower. In using the quern, the grain was dropped with one hand into the central opening, while, with the other, the upper stone was revolved by means of a stick inserted in a small opening near the edge. 'Histories report that he [Plautus] was brought into such povertye, that he was fayne to serve a baker in turning a *quern* or handmill, to gain a living'—John Northbrooke's *Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes* (1581).
 40. *Puck*—the same as *Pug*, in Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). His name, like *Bogie*, seems rather of Slavonian than of Germanic origin, though probably, after all, it is rather a depravation of the noisy, riotous, and tricksy Greek and Roman god, Bacchus, in the coarser forms of his activity. Thomas Heywood, in his *Hierarchie of Angels* (1635), says:

'In John Milesius any man may reade
 Of devils in Sarmatia honour'd,
 Called Kotri or Kiboldi; such as wee,
Pugs and hobgoblins call; there dwellings be

In corners of old houses least frequented,
Or beneath stocks of wood; and there convented
Make fearful noise in buttries and dairies:
Robin Goodfellow some, some call them fairies'

—Bk. ix, p. 574.

There rises before our imagination ‘a rough, knurly-limbed, faun-faced, shock-pated little fellow,’ whenever we think of ‘that madcap, Will-o’-the-Wisp, that spiritualisation of fun, frolic, and mischief—immortal Puck. Robin Goodfellow is an abstraction of all “the quips and cranks and wanton wiles,” of all the tricks and practical jokes in vogue among “human mortals.” Puck is the patron-saint of sky-larking—a true minion of wagery and mischief; ‘corrector-general of slatternly menials and other household delinquents, he was the “good genius of honest thrift; the household deity of order and cleanliness,” though the character in which he is most familiarly recognised, is that of a boisterous mischief-maker’—C. C. Clarke’s *Shakespeare Characters*, 104–106.

47. *Gossip's bowl*—christening cup, and thence the caudle it contains. A drink compounded of ale, sugar, nutmeg, toast, and roasted crab-apples. It was sometimes called *lambswool*. See *Romeo and Juliet*, III, v, 175.
48. *Roasted crab*. Crab-apples put hissing-hot into the spiced ale of the wassail-bowl, were esteemed a rare delicacy in old English festival times—times ‘when roasted crabs hiss in the bowl’—*Love's Labour's Lost*, V, iv, 935.
49. *Bob*. ‘Bob’ is a Warwickshire provincialism for a smart rap—*As You Like It*, II, vii, 55. To *bob* is to hit suddenly—*Troilus and Cressida*, II, i, 76.
51. *Aunt*—gossip, gammer, crone.
54. *Tailor*—perhaps a term to express ‘wanting in trustworthiness.’
55. *Loffe*—an old form of *laugh*; as *neexe* (56) for ‘sneeze.’
56. *Waxen*—grow, increase. Compare ‘climb in the merriness’—*Love's Labour's Lost*, I, i, 202.
- 1b. *Neexe*—probably an imitative word; now *sneezing*.

SCENE II.

4. *Tarry*—stay, wait. Said to be derived from the Welsh *tarrian*, to strike against anything, and thereby to stop; probably connected with the Latin *tardare*, to delay.
8. *Pipes of corn*—rustic flageolets, made of a piece of corn-stalk cut through the centre of a knot, and then slit lengthwise down to the depths of two-thirds of its width, so as to make a vibrating tongue about an inch long. The wind is blown through the knot, with the cornpipe in the mouth beyond the tongue-part, and a shrill sound is produced. This is a very

old-fashioned instrument, for in Chaucer's time even, shepherd boys had

' Many a floite and lithing horne,
And pipe made of gren̄ corne.'

9. *Phillida.* This is the Greek accusative of the proper name, *Phyllis*, and may perhaps have been suggested by some remembrance of the golden-haired Phyllis—*Phyllidis flava*—to whom we find Horace 'versing love' in *Odes*, II, iv, 14, and IV, ii. In *England's Helicon* (1600) several poems relating to *Phillida* and *Coridon* occur, one of which closes thus:

' And Phillida, with garlands gay,
Was made the lady of the May.'

10. *The farthest steep of India.* From a popular work of the time, Bartholmæus Anglicus or Glanvil's *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1582), Shakespeare probably got the hint for this poetic phrase: 'Pigmei be little men of a cubite long, and the Greeks call them Pigmeos, and they dwell in mountains of Inde, and the sea of ocean is nigh to them, as Papias sayth. And Austin [Augustine] sayth in this wise, that Pigmei bee unneth a cubite long, and be perfect of age in the third yeare, and ware old in the seaventh yeare, and it is said that they fight with cranes. Lib. VII, cap. iii, Plinius. . . . Aristotle meaneth that Pigmei lyve in dennes. All the later writers affirm this to be true, they are in the uttermost mountaines of Inde'—Fol. 377. On this line, Leigh Hunt, in his *Imagination and Fancy*, p. 180, remarks: 'Shakespeare understood the charm of remoteness in poetry, as he did everything else. Oberon has been dancing on the sunny steeps looking towards Cathay, where the

"Chineses drive
Their cany waggons light."

11. *Amazon.* 'The Amazons, daughters of Ares and Harmonia, are both early creations and frequent reproductions of the ancient epic—which recognised in Pallas Athena the finished type of an irresistible female warrior. A nation of courageous, hardy, and indefatigable women, dwelling apart from men, permitting only a short temporary intercourse for the purpose of renovating their numbers, and burning out their right breast, with a view of enabling themselves to draw the bow freely—this was at once a general type stimulating to the fancy of the poet, and a theme eminently popular with his hearers. . . . Accordingly we find these warlike females constantly reappearing in the ancient poems [of Greece], and universally accepted as past realities'—Grote's *History of Greece*, vol. i, p. 286. 'The story tells of Hercules, that he set out from Greece and brought back with

him the girdle of their queen, Hippolyta; also of Theseus and the Athenians, that they were the first who defeated in battle and repelled these women in the invasion of Europe.

. . . . And those Athenian orators who have pronounced panegyrics on the citizens slain in battle have dwelt upon the victory over the Amazons as among the most memorable of Athenian exploits—Arrian's *Expedition of Alexander*, as quoted by Grote in his *History of Greece*, vol. i, p. 296.

- 19-21. *Perigenia . . . Egle . . . Ariadne and Antiope.* See Introduction, *ante*, pp. 16, 18.

23. *The middle summer's spring.* 'In Churchyard's *Charitie* (1595), we have a similar expression :

' "A warmer time in better tune to bring
This hard, cold age, when comes a summer's spring."

Spring is here used for beginning'—J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. 76.

25. *Paved fountain*—pebble-bottomed, in contrast to a 'rushy brook,' in which the weeds grew in the mud.

32. *Pelting.* The Folio gives 'petty'; the quartos supply 'pelting,' a word which indicates the headlong course and insignificance of the streamlets spoken of.

33. *Continents*—banks, their boundaries or containers. See: 'The continent and summary of my fortune'—*Merchant of Venice*, III, ii, 130.

- 34-55. The classical scholar, whose mind is unhampered by the 'less Greek' of Shakespeare, may remember a passage on the plague in Thebes, in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles, I, i, 21-30, of which these lines appear to be a fine poetical expansion.

38. *Fatted.* Anglo-Saxon *foettian*, to feed, nourish. *Luke xi*, 23.

- 1b. *Murrain*—for 'murrained,' distempered, plague-smitten. Greek *μαράνεια*, Latin *marcere*, Anglo-Saxon *amyrnan*, to mar, to destroy. A peculiar inflammatory disease among cattle. *Ex. ix*, 3.

39. *Nine men's morris.* In Cotgrave's *Dictionary* (1611) *Le jeu de Merelles* is thus explained: 'The boyish game called *merils*, or fivepenny morris; played here most commonly with stones, but in France with pawns, or men made on purpose, and termed *merelles*. These might originally have been black, and hence called *morris* or *merelles*, as we yet term a black cherry a *morello*, and a small black cherry a *merry*, perhaps from *Maurus*, a Moor, or rather from *morum*, a mulberry.' It was, says Dr Hyde, in his essay *De Ludis Orientalium* (1689-94), 'likewise called ninepenny or nine-pin miracle, threepenny, fivepenny, and ninepenny morris; or three-pin, five-pin, and nine-pin morris, all corruptions of *merels*, or *merelles*, or *mereaux*—'an ancient French word,'

- as Douce explains it, 'for the jettons or counters with which it was played.'
- 40, 41. *Quaint mazes . . . undistinguishable*—footmarks left by the dancers in the rustic sports of the village green. This is explained in Ellis's *Brand's Popular Antiquities*, vol. ii, p. 439, as 'a sport still followed by boys,' called 'running the figure of eight,' or cross-tig.
42. *Human mortals*. This is a fairy's way of distinguishing man at once from the lower animals, and from her own kindred. It is not a pleonasm, but a happily-chosen *epizeuxis*, or the intensifying union of two similar terms.
- Ib. Winter here*. This is *winter-heere* in the old copies, and has been corrected to *winter-cheere*; but perhaps an emendation made simultaneously by Dr C. M. Ingleby and H. E. Brae, *winter-geare*, is a nearer guess.
- 44, 45. *The moon . . . the air*. 'The moone gathereth deawe in the aire, for she printeth the vertue of hir moysture in the aire, and chaungeth the ayre in a manere that is unseene, and breedeth and engendereth deaw in the upper part thereof'—*Stephen Batman upon Bartholemē his boke De Proprietatibus Rerarum* (1582), fol. 133.
46. *Rheumatic*. *Rheum* is that thin, watery matter which oozes through the glands, chiefly of the mouth, nostrils, eyes, etc. So Shakespeare uses it in *Merchant of Venice*: 'You did void your *rheum* upon my beard'—I, iii, 118; 'Why holds thine eye that lamentable *rheum*'—*King John*, III, i, 22; and hence *rheumatic* signified causing disorders in the *rheum*, producing colds, coughs, soreness of eyes, catarrhs, and other morbid defluxions of the humours, not as now causing those pains which attack the joints, and the muscles and membranes between the joints which is what we understand by *rheumatism*.
47. *Through this distemperature*—on account of this dissension. *Distemperature* has a twofold reference: (1) to the unpleasant disturbance of the temper of Oberon and his queen, and (2) the disturbance of the temperature of 'the seasons' difference.'
50. *Hyem's*—Latin for winter, personified. Greek *χειμών*, Sanscrit *hima*, snow.
53. *Childing autumn*—fruitful. Compare:
- 'The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime'—*Sonnet 97.*
62. *Henchman*—variously derived, as (1) *Haunch + man*, attendant, follower, page; (2) *Hine + man*, a servantman; (3) *Hengst + man*, a horseman.
67. *Neptune's yellow sands*—on the sea-shore; Neptune, the god of the sea, being put for the sea itself.
- 77, 78. *For her sake*. Such a doubling of a phrase is called *epanaphora* or repetition.

89-100. *Thou rememberest*, etc. ‘Many of the poet’s biographers believe that this passage refers in a special manner to the reception given by Leicester to Queen Elizabeth at Kenilworth Castle in the summer of 1575; and as Kenilworth is only fourteen miles distant from Stratford, they have further conjectured that Shakespeare himself, who was at the time in his twelfth year, was probably a witness of that splendid ceremonial.’ G. Gascoigne states, in his account of it in 1576, that ‘Triton, in likeness of a mermaid, came towards her majesty,’ and that ‘Arion appeared sitting on a dolphin’s back;’ and Laneham, in a descriptive *Letter* written in the preceding year, makes special mention of a ‘ditty in metre aptly indited to the matter, and after by voice deliciously delivered.’ Those passages might have furnished Shakespeare with the allusions in the drama, but we have no means of knowing whether he was himself one of the crowd who witnessed the magnificent pageants prepared by Leicester’—Thomas Kenny’s *Life and Genius of Shakespeare* (1864), p. 177, note.

92. *Dulcet and harmonious breath*. ‘How strangely felicitous the choice of epithet by Shakespeare! and yet there is conveyed, I know not how, an impression that the epithets are not chosen, but rise spontaneously with the thought. He says the maid uttered “dulcet and harmonious breath;” not “notes,” as any other poet would have said, but *breath*, as if the marvellous creature exhaled music, as if from her lovely parted lips nothing could come which did not take from them a form of beauty. Let any one put “notes” or “tones” in the place of *breath* in this line, and see how the bloom on its rich beauty vanishes’—Richard Grant White in *Shakespeare’s Scholar*, p. 214.

94. *Certain stars shot madly*, etc. ‘It has been generally supposed,’ Miss Strickland says, ‘that Shakespeare’s mysterious lines in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* imply that some seductions had been used by the captive queen [Mary] to charm the northern magnates [Northumberland and Westmoreland] from their duty to their own sovereign’—*The Lives of the Queens of England*, vol. vi, ‘Elizabeth,’ p. 297.

98. *Cupid all armed*. So Ben Jonson describes the love-god:

‘He doth bear a golden bow,
And a quiver hanging low,
Full of arrows that outbrave
Dian’s shafts.’

99. *Vestal*—a priestess of Vesta, the goddess of home; a chaste and pure virgin.

108. *Before milk-white, now purple*. ‘The change of the flower from white to purple was evidently suggested by the change of the mulberry in Ovid’s story of Pyramus [and Thisbe]’—

Rev. Joseph Hunter's *New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, vol. i., p. 293. 'There is in this metamorphosis—as in everything of Shakespeare's—a singular propriety and adherence to nature. "Love-in-idleness" is the *Viola tricolor*, but the English flora possesses likewise the *Viola lactea*, which, transplanted from the fields into rustic gardens, suffers a metamorphosis, its leaves becoming heart-shaped, and its flowers sky-blue (Smith's *Flora Britannica* in article "*Viola*"). The change, therefore, of this "milk-white" violet into one of its congeners, whose petals are frequently "purple," is natural, easy, and elegant'—Rev. N. J. Halpin's *Oberon's Vision Illustrated* (1843), p. 95.

- 111. *The juice*, etc. The solution of the love-difficulties of a plot through the adoption of philtres and love-charms, and of magic draughts inducing forgetfulness, was very common among the tale-writers of the Romance school. In the *Diana* of Montemayor, and in *Sigurd and Dushmanta*, the use made of this means may be compared with the art of Shakespeare in employing the juice of 'love-in-idleness,' with a meaning almost parabolical.
- 116, 117. *A girdle . . . minutes*. This idea seems to have commended itself to George Chapman, who, in *Bussy d'Ambois* (1613), speaks of 'great seamen using all their wealth,' 'to put a girdle round about the world' (I, i, 23).
- 127. *I am invisible*. This is a key-note to the imagination. Perhaps as a fay-king he had the power conferred on those human mortals who bear fern-seed, and so walk invisible; perhaps it only indicates that he will hide himself, or perhaps he was dressed in that stage costume conventionally indicative of invisibility, for Henslowe mentions among his properties 'a robe for to go invisible.'
- 133. *Wood within this wood*. In this punning sentence the first 'wood' is the old English *wod*, mad, distracted, furious, wild; the second from *wude*, a large collection of growing timber trees.
- 136. *Hard-hearted adamant*. 'The adamant is a stone of Inde, small and rare, in colour like to iron, but in clear reflection and representation of image, more crystal-like. It yieldeth or giveth place to nothing. Diascorides saith that it is called the stone of reconciliation and of love'—*A Greene Forest*, by John Maplet (1567). Again, in the same book, we read that 'the loadstone draweth iron to it, even as one lover coveteth and desireth another.' Lord Bacon says: 'I read that in nature there be two kinds of motions or appetites in sympathy; the one of iron to the adamant for perfection, the other of the vine to the stake for sustentation'—J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps' Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, p. 77. In the resolute John 'Florio's Second Frutes

to be gathered of twelve trees, and his *Garden of Recreation* yielding six thousand Italian Proverbs' (1591), the following phrase occurs: 'Looks of adamant to draw heartes of yron like ships to the shipwreck.'

'The adamant and beauty we discover
To be alike; for beauty draws a lover.
The adamant is iron; do not blame

His loving them but that which caused the same.'

—*Britannia's Pastorals*, I, i, 639-642.

Shakespeare, like Bacon (*Essays*, xviii), uses *adamant* for 'loadstone' or 'magnet.' It is derived from Greek ἀδάμας, the unconquerable. See *Ezek.* iii, 19; *Zech.* vii, 12.

155. *Impeach*—bring into doubt, expose to trial.

161. *Privilege*—surety, guarantee, immunity.

170. *The wildest . . . you*—a version of Ovid's

'Mitius inveni quam te genus omne ferarum.'

('I have found the whole race of wild beasts gentler than you.')

171. *The story shall be changed*; *Apollo*, etc.—alluding to the story of Apollo's love-chase of his first flame, Daphne, as related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i, 453-567, referred to in the *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, ii, 55, and *Troilus and Cressida*, I, i, 94, and thus epitomised in the *Picta Poesis* of Bartholomus Aenean or Anulus (p. 47):

'Ille amat, haec odit, fugit haec; sectatur at ille
Dumque fugit; laureus facta repente stetit
Sic amat et frustra, nec Apollo potitus amore est
Ultus Apollinis est, sic amor opprobrium.'

('He loves, she hates, she flies; but he pursues,
And while she flies, stopped suddenly to laurel changed;
So loves Apollo, and in vain; no joy of love ensues,
Thus Love, Apollo's grave offence, gravely revenged.')

173. *Griffin*. The griffin is a fabulous creature invented by the fancy of the ancient, and adopted by that of the modern world. It had the body of a lion, and the head and wings of an eagle, and dwelt in the Rhipæan mountains, between the Hyperboreans and the one-eyed Arimaspians, as the guardian of the gold of the north. Gerard Legh, a herald of great reputation in Queen Elizabeth's time, and author of the *Accedance of Armory* (1562), speaks of griffins with entire sincerity as actual living creatures: 'I think they are of great hugeness, for I have a claw of one of their paws which should show them to be as big as two lions'—Quoted in Newton's *Display of Heraldry*, p. 126.

185. *To die upon the hand*—to die resting on or upholden by the hand.

190-193. 'Except in [dream or] fairyland these flowers would not be all found at the same season'—W. A. WRIGHT.

191. *Oxlips* (*Primula elatior*)—a favourite flower of the English villagers, partaking of the characters of the primrose and the fragrant cowslip, from which they make tea and wine, which they use as a cosmetic and as a folk-cure for the palsy.
192. *Woodbine*. Both Gerarde and Lyte, in their *Herbals*, identify the plants called ‘in Englishe honisuckle or woodbine, and of some caprifole;’ but Shakespeare speaks of them as distinct plants (IV, i, 39), taking the one for the *Convolvulus*, and the other for the *Lonicra caprifolium*.
193. *Eglantine*—the sweetbrier. *Cymbeline*, IV, ii, 223.
196. *Snake*. Adapted from Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*:

‘Lubrica serpens
Exuit in spinis vestem’—IV, 59.

(‘A smooth serpent that in
The thicket leaves its skin.’)

SCENE III.

1. *Roundel*—a dance in which the dancers join hands, form in a ring, and go round; also a part song or catch.
4. *Rere-mice*—bats. The Old English name for the bat was flicker-mouse, or flutter-mouse.
7. *Quaint*. Cotgrave explains ‘*Coint . . . [as] quaint, compt, neat, fine, spruce, briske, smirke, snug, daintie, trim, tricked up.*’
9. *Double tongue*—forked tongue. See ‘adder’s fork’—*Macbeth*, IV, i, 17.

‘A lurking adder
Whose double tongue may with a mortal touch
Throw death upon thy sovereign’s enemies’
—*Richard II*, III, ii, 21.

‘Adders who, with cloven tongues,
Do hiss me into madness’—*Tempest*, II, ii, 13, 14.

11. *Newts*—efts, a small kind of lizard.
- 1b. *Blind-worm*—the slowworm (*Anguis fragilis*). ‘The eyeless venomous worm’—*Timon of Athens*, IV, iii, 182. See Drayton’s *Noah’s Flood*, 481, ‘The small-eyed slowworm held of many blind.’

‘If the viper could hear and the slowworm could see,
Then England from serpents would never be free’
—*Suffolk proverb*.

13. *Philomel*—the daughter of Pandion, who was transformed into a nightingale—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, vi, 411-675.
29. *Ounce*—French *once*, Spanish *onza*; an animal of the tiger or panther species. It is now sometimes applied to the jaguar of South America, although the creature meant by Shake-

- speare was a native of the mountainous districts of Asia. Naturalists doubt the existence of the ounce as an animal distinct from the leopard, panther, or tiger.
30. *Pard*—leopard or panther. *Tempest*, IV, i, 257.
- 1b. *Boar*. See *Venus and Adonis*, 614-630.
45. *Love . . . conference*. Let no suspicion of ill enter thy mind. In the *conversation* of those who are assured of each other's kindness, not *suspicion*, but *love*, takes the *meaning*—S. W. SINGER.
- 51, 52. *Lying so . . . prettily*. Lysander had caught at Hermia's use of the word *lie* (line 43), and puns upon it. Hermia here continues the game of punning—taking *Ly* of *Lysander* and *ly* of *prettily* into her service to hint gently what she said openly she did not mean, 'Lysander lied' (line 54).
53. *Beshrew*. Chaucer uses *to shrew* for 'to curse'; a shrewd and a curst cow were the same. Florio supplies under the word *Museragno*, the following fabulous bit of folk-lore on the meaning and derivation of *beshrew*: 'A kinde of mouse called a *shreve*, which is deadly to other beastes, if he but bite them, and laming all, if he but touch them; of whome came that ordinary *curse*, I *beshrew* you, as much as to say, I wish you death.' Here it is equal to 'ill befall.'
61. *Amen, amen*. Here Lysander jocosely expresses perfect agreement by quoting the phraseology of the clerk in the church service, when making responses to the prayers of the priest. See *Richard II*, IV, i, 173.
74. *Dank*—moist, damp. *Damp* is a more occasional, *dank* a more continuous wetness.
77. *Churl*—*ceorl*, a rustic, a boor, and thence a rude, ill-bred, surly person.
85. *Darkling*—in the dark. See *King Lear*, I, iv, 237; and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, IV, xv, 10; also in the *Two Angry Women of Abingdon* (1599), 'We'll run away with the torch and leave them to fight *darkling*'—Hazlitt's *Dodsley's Old Plays*, vol. vii, p. 358.
98. *Sphery*—round, full, large.
118. *Point*—topmost reach, apex, culmination.
119. *Marshal*—French *mareschal*, chief officer, regulator, commander-in-chief.
121. *Love's stories*, etc. Similarly Lady Capulet speaks of Paris as 'This precious book of love, this unbound lover'—*Romeo and Juliet*, I, iii, 87.
138. *Heresies*—doctrinal errors. *Cymbeline*, III, iv, 84.
149. *Prey*—ravages.

ACT III.—SCENE I.

4. *Tiring house*—retiring or dressing-room, place where actors arrayed themselves for their parts. Compare :

‘We wondered, Shakespeare, that thou went’st so soon,
From the world’s stage to the grave’s *tiring-room*’
—J. M.’s *Lines*, prefixed to Shakespeare’s plays (1623).

22. *Eight and six*—common metre, consisting of seven iambic measures, rhyming in couplets, and arranged so that the pause falls regularly after the fourth foot. It was customary to write these in two lines containing eight and six syllables respectively, like the majority of psalms and hymns.
23. *Eight and eight*—octosyllabic metre, consisting of four iambic measures, or eight syllables, arranged in couplets, in general rhyming at the close of the lines.
46. *A calendar almanack*. A calendar is a perpetual almanac, and an almanac an annual calendar. The former refers to time in general, the latter only to that portion of time occupied in one circuit of the earth round the sun ; the one is applied to ‘the settled and national mode of registering the course of time by the sun’s progress ;’ the other is a subsidiary handy manual, selected from the materials furnished in the calendar. In ancient Rome, the first day of the month was publicly proclaimed, and the festivals in which the people would require to bear a part were then announced, and a placard containing the same information was set up in certain public places. From the Greek word *καλεω*, I call aloud or proclaim, the first days of the month were called *kalenda* ; and *fasti calendares* was the name of the placards. From that our word *calendar*, as the name of a register of the order of the seasons, months, festivals, holidays, etc., of the year, is derived. Verstegan, in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (p. 46), says of our Saxon ancestors : ‘They used to engrave upon certain squared sticks, about a foot in length, or shorter or longer as they pleased, the courses of the moones of the whole yeere, whereby they could alwaies certainly tell when the newe moones, full moones, and changes should happen, as also their festival daies ; and such a carved stick they called an *al-mon-aght* ; that is to say, *almonched*, to wit, the regard or observation of all the moones ; and hence is derived the name of *almanac*.’ As the mingling of incongruities is one of the chief characteristics of a ‘dream,’ it is one of the minor sly humours of Shakespeare in this play to make Bottom thus call for a calendar, to ‘find out moonshine,’ as the Greek months always commenced with the new moon, real lunar months being that by which they reckoned.

As they had no calends, the Roman phrase *ad calendas Græcas* meant proverbially 'never.'

Sir Harris Nicholas, in his *Chronology of History*, has pointed out the interesting fact, which is very little known, that an effort was made to reform the calendar in this country, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when Shakespeare had just come of age, by the introduction of a bill, entitled : 'An Act, giving Her Majesty authority to alter and make a new calendar, according to the calendar used in other countries.' This bill was read a first time in the House of Lords, on the 16th of March (27 Eliz.) 1584-5. But the bill was not passed into an act. Perhaps the controversy arising from this attempt, suggested the use of the phrase here employed.

66. *Brake*. This is usually interpreted to mean a furze bush, or a thicket of underwood. It is here, however, rather a *frame*, an enclosed space railed off with spars, intertwined with hawthorn branches, used for keeping sheep together when required, and forming for the nonce a rude 'green-room,' into which the actors could retire from the scene, 'every one according to his cue.' Bottom entered the brake, leant upon the sparred sides of it meditatively, Puck came cunningly behind him, and 'at this advantage' fixed 'an ass's nowl' upon his head. See III, ii, 9-17.
67. *Hempen homespuns*—coarse fellows.
72. *Of odious*—Bottom's mistake for 'have odours.'
81. *See a noise*. Shakespeare is fond of making such jests; see IV, i, 206; V, i, 188.
84. *Juvenal . . . Jew*. Used here jocularly for *juvenile*, lad, youth, having a reference to the alliteration *Jew*, as if, perhaps, a part of *jewel*. It may be, however, a corruption of the French *choux, joujou*, plaything, or an abbreviation from *bijou*, jewel. See 'My incony Jew'—*Love's Labour's Lost*, III, i, 136.
104. Richard Harvey, brother of Dr Gabriel Harvey, is said by Thomas Nash to have set up on the school gates of Cambridge, where he was lecturer on natural philosophy, an image of Aristotle, heels upwards, with asses' ears upon his head, in 1592.
107. *Knavery*—intended trick, wagging.
111. *Ousel-cock*—Old French *avicelle, oisel*, from Latin *avis*, a bird; the blackbird. It is also applied to several members of the thrush family. The British thrush is called the ring-ousel, the dipper, the water-ousel; the rose-coloured pastor is also designated an ouzel.
113. *Throstle*—Old English *throstele*, German *drossel*; the missel-thrush. Isaak Walton, in his *Complete Angler*, conjoins the same two birds: 'The blackbird and the throstle with their melodious voices bid welcome to the spring.'

- 116.** *The finch, etc.*—French *les pinçons*. In ornithology the family of the finches is called the *Fringillidae*, of which the sparrow (*Fringilla*) and the lark (*Alauda*) are members. There are among birds of this species—bramblefinch, bullfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, greenfinch, groundfinch, hawfinch, many of which, with their congeners, are found in the woods, hedges, and plains of our own country.
- 117.** *Cuckoo*—Greek *κόκκυξ*, Latin *coccix*, Scotch *gowk*; a migratory bird, whose name is an imitation of the sound it makes, two simple, unvarying notes. This is called plain-song.
- 149.** *Apricocks*—Greek *περικύκα*, Arabic *berekach*, Latin *precocia*, whence, *a-precoke*. This is the *Primus Armeniaca*, a fruit-bearing tree which formerly covered the slopes of the Caucasus, Ararat, and the other mountains in and about Armenia. Gough, in his *British Topography*, states that the apricot-tree was first brought to England, in 1524, by Woolf, the gardener to Henry VIII. John Gerarde (1545-1607) had two varieties in his garden.
- Ib.* *Dewberries.* The delicate fruit of the *Rubus casius*, a bramble whose berries contain a dewy sort of juice. This plant grows on the borders of fields, and on the banks of hedges and ditches. The fruit is very pleasant to the taste, and consists of a few drupes half enclosed in the calyx, and covered with a grey bloom. It generally grows close to the ground, and the fruit is ripe in September. Beisley's *Shakespeare's Garden*, p. 51. The dewberry was found in Greece.
- 150.** *Grapes.* ‘The vine grows wild on the coast of the Caspian Sea, in Armenia, and in Caramania. From Asia it passed into Greece, and thence into Sicily. The Phoenicians carried it into the south of France; the Romans planted it on the banks of the Rhine’—Humboldt's *Geographie des Plantes*, p. 26. It is said that the vine was introduced into England by the Romans. Of all berry-fruits, the grape has been, in every age, held in the highest esteem. The Greeks gave the name Bacchus to the god, who had these (*bacchæ*) berries offered to him in sacrifice.
- Ib.* *Figs.* The Greeks dated the origin of the fig (*Ficus carica*) into the far past of antiquity. When Lycurgus decreed that the Spartans should dine in common, the principal contribution of each to the general stock consisted of flour, wine, cheese, and figs. The Athenians regarded them as so essential, that the export of them was prohibited in Attica. The fig consists of a pulp, containing a number of seed-like pericarps, enclosed in a rind. It has no visible flower. The fruit rises immediately from the joints of the tree, in the form of small buds, with a perforation at the end, but not showing anything like petals, or the ordinary parts of fructification. As the fig enlarges, the flower comes to maturity.

in its concealment. The fig-tree is said to have been first introduced into England by Cardinal Pole in 1525, and the specimens are said still to survive in the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth. In Shakespeare's time figs grew in Covent Garden, which then bounded the Strand on the north, and extended from St Martin's Lane to Drury Lane.

- 150. Mulberries.** Of the mulberry (*Morus*) there are many species. None of them are native to England, or probably even to Europe, but some of them are hardy enough to thrive and bear fruit in Britain. The white mulberry (*Morus alba*) is a delicate tree, whose berries are light-coloured and insipid. The black mulberry (*Morus nigra*) is a larger and more hardy tree. Its fruit is of a blackish red, and has much more taste than the other. The mulberry abounded in Italy, but was unknown in early Greece, to which it was introduced from the East.
- 151. Honeybags.** These bags, with which every boy who has spent his holidays in the country is acquainted, are, 'in fact, the first stomach of the bee. Into it the liquid extract of flowers which has been collected by the tongue flows, after passing through the mouth and oesophagus. It is a membranous receptacle, capable of considerable distension, and exhibiting a different aspect according to the quantity it contains of that saccharine fluid, which is there converted into honey'—See Robert Patterson's *Insects mentioned by Shakespeare*, p. 129.
- Ib. Humble-bees (*Bombus*)**—a genus of social bees, found in almost every part of the world, but most abundant in temperate regions. They have thick, hairy bodies, the hairs on which are mostly arranged in coloured bands. The name is probably a corruption of *hummer-bee*, referring to the loud humming sound produced by the wings of the insect. The species best known, apparently, to Shakespeare was that of the red-tailed humble-bee (*Bombus lapidarius*)—*All's Well that Ends Well*, IV, v, 7—which he also describes as 'the red-hipped humble-bee'—IV, i, 11.
- 162. I cry your worship's, etc.** 'The worthy Bottom displays no inconsiderable store of imagination in his intercourse with the little people of the fairy world. How pleasantly he falls in with their several natures and qualities; dismissing them one by one with a gracious speech, like a prince at his levee! . . . And how daintily-epicurean the fellow shows when he is installed in the court of Queen Titania!'—C. Cowden Clarke's *Shakespeare Characters* (1863), p. 101.
- 166. Cobweb**—the web of the *cop* or spider, which was a favourite folk-cure for stanching the bleeding of a wound.
- 168. Peasblossom** is, according to Bottom's jocular genealogy, the son of Master Peascod—the shell of the pea, the pod in which the peas grow—and of Mistress Squash, the soft, un-

formed pod of the pea. See : ‘Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy, as a *squash* is before it is a peascod, or a coddling when almost an apple’—*Twelfth Night*, II, v, 164; also *Winter’s Tale*, I, ii, 160.

174. *Patience*—power of endurance, long-suffering. The joke consists in regarding ox-beef as a giant, by whom many of the seed of the mustard-race were devoured.

SCENE II.

9. *A crew of patches*—a pack of fools. Florio gives : ‘*Paxso, a foole, a patch, a madman*’—*A Worlde of Words* (1598). See : ‘The *patch* is kind enough’—*Merchant of Venice*, II, v, 45. Some, however, derive the word from the motley coat of the jester, which was made up of *patches*, and this, perhaps, agrees with Bottom’s notion further on, where he philosophically observes, ‘Man is but a *patched* fool’—IV, i, 237. Douce shows in his *Illustrations of Shakespeare* that several domestic fools were, during the sixteenth century, nicknamed Patch.
13. *Thick-skin*—insensible fellow, clown, like thick-skull or thick-head. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV, v, 2.
17. *Nowl*—Saxon *knol*, rounded top, head; whence also *knoll* and *noddle*.
20. *Fowler*—Anglo-Saxon *fugelere*, a bird-catcher. *Prov.* vi, 5; *Ps.* xci, 3.
21. *Russet-pated*. Mr Bennet suggests *russet-patted*, or red-legged, from French *pattes rousset*.
34. *Ass*. The ass is of Assyrian origin, and is said to derive its name from the first syllable of its aboriginal habitat. The term *ass*, as applied to the disciples of folly, has been of very long standing, and the origin of it, no doubt, took place from their stupidity; hence the following pun, ‘*Ass in presenti* seldom makes a wise man *in futuro*’.
36. *Latched*. Some commentators, deriving this from French *lecher*, to lick, explain it as besmeared, anointed. It may more naturally be regarded as ‘closed up the power of proper vision in.’
55. *Antipodes* (*avri* and *rov*). The earth being a sphere, those who occupy one side of the globe must have their feet set against those who dwell on the opposite. Parmenides first suggested the sphericity of the earth, Plato taught the doctrine of antipodes, and Aristotle maintained and proved it.
72. *An adder*, etc. Perhaps suggested by *Ps.* cxl, 3.
74. *Mispried*—mistaken. Old French *mespris*, neglect or contempt. See :

‘Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprizing what they look on.’

—*Much Ado About Nothing*, III, i, 52.

- 84-87. *So sorrow's some stay.* Compare *Tempest*, II, i, 183-189.
90. *Mispriſion*—misunderstanding. The word is properly a law term from Old French *mespris*, neglect, or contempt. ‘Mispriſions are generally divided into two sorts: negative, which consist in the concealment of something that ought to be revealed; and positive, which consist in something which ought not to have been done’—Sir W. Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, bk. iv, ch. ix. Oberon royally accuses Puck of the latter misdemeanour.
97. *Sighs of love, which cost*, etc. It was the belief of Shakespeare’s age that every sigh cost a drop of blood, and so wasted away life. See: ‘Blood-consuming sighs’—*2 Henry VI*, III, ii, 61; ‘blood-sucking sighs’—*3 Henry VI*, IV, iv, 22; ‘sighs that hurt by easing’—*Hamlet*, IV, vii, 123.
99. *Against* is here used to signify in expectation of, and in preparation for, the time at which. Compare: ‘Against your nuptial’—V, i, 75; *Romeo and Juliet*, IV, i, 113; *Richard II*, III, iv, 28; and *Hamlet*, I, i, 158, II, ii, 505, III, iv, 50.
101. *Swifter Tartar’s bow.* Shakespeare here applies to the Tartars the character of the ancient Parthians, who, Plutarch tells us, ‘shot as they fled; and this they do with a dexterity inferior only to that of the Scythians. It is indeed an excellent invention, since they fight while they save themselves, and thus escape the disgrace of flight’—*Life of Crassus*. See also Virgil’s *Georgics*, iii, 31; Horace’s *Carmina*, xiii, 17.
105. *Eſpy*—French *espier*, Spanish *espiar*, Latin *aspicere*, Old English *aspie* or *aspy*, to see, behold, spy. —*Gen.* xlvi, 27.
121. *Preposterously*—in its Latin signification, *perversely*, contrary to the true order and method of an occurrence.
141. *Taurus*—a high mountain-range running through Asia from west to east, but specially applied to the chain of peaks in the south of Asia Minor, between the basin of the Euphrates and the Black Sea.
144. *Princess of pure white.* It has been proposed to change this splendidly expressive term into *impress*. But what does this give in exchange for this royal phrase, which means, ‘chief in beauty, all-excelling,’ as in ‘It is the prince of palfreys’—*Henry V*, III, vii, 29?
175. *Aby*—be liable to the consequences of; abide.
195. *Injurious*—insolent, like the Greek *ὑπουρθις*. *I Tim.* i, 13. Compare *2 Henry VI*, I, iv, 51; *Coriolanus*, III, iii, 69.
198. *Is all the counsel, etc.* A reference to these lines occurs in a note to Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The author, speaking of Gregory of Nazianzus, says: ‘Gregory’s poem on his own life contains some beautiful lines (tome ii, p. 8), which burst from the heart, and speak the pangs of injured and lost friendship [which he quotes in the original]. In the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Helena addresses the same pathetic complaint to her friend Hermia. Shakespeare had never read the poems of Gregory Nazianzen [which were first printed in 1609]; he was ignorant of the Greek language [?]; but his mother tongue, the language of nature, is the same in Cappadocia and in Britain'—Chap. xxvii, vol. iii, p. 223.

202. *Childhood innocence.* *Childhood* is here used as an adjective for *childish*, as in the *Merchant of Venice*:

‘I urge this *childhood* proof,
Because what follows is pure *innocence*’—I, i, 144.

203. *Artificial*—art-exercising, skilful, clever.

215. *Rent*—as in *Jer.* iv, 30, the old form of *rend*, to tear.

237. *Perséver* has, in Shakespeare, always the accent on the second syllable. *Hamlet*, I, ii, 92; *King John*, II, i, 421; *As You Like It*, V, ii, 4, etc.

245. *Stay.* From Old French *estayer*, Spanish *estiar*, Latin *statuere*, to stop.

257. *Ethiop*—sunburnt, swart, tawny, resembling an inhabitant of Ethiopia, and therefore displeasing. See below, ‘tawny Tartar.’

Ib. *No, no, sir:—he will.* The Cambridge editors, while supposing ‘that some words, perhaps a whole line, have fallen out of the text,’ yet ‘retain substantially the reading of the quartos, as above.’ The folios give: ‘No, no, sir, Seem to break loose;’ Pope read, ‘No, no, he’ll seem, To break away;’ Capell, ‘No, no, he’ll not come, Seem to break loose;’ Malone, No, no, he’ll—sir, Seem,’ etc.; Steevens, ‘No, no, sir; he will Seem,’ etc.; and Jackson, ‘No, no; he’ll not stir: Seem,’ etc.; but the resolution of the difficulty by *apostrophe*, or the turning away of the thoughts suddenly under emotional pressure to a new idea, before the old one had been fully expressed, is the most simple.

292. Read: ‘And with her pers’nage, hér | tall pér|sonáge.’

327. *Flout*—mock. *Macbeth*, I, ii, 49.

329. *Minima*. *Minimus*, the lection of the Folio, as applied by Lysander to Hermia, ought properly to have been *minima* in the feminine, not ‘little’ only, but ‘least;’ and so we read. Theobald suggested, ‘you *minim*, you.’ In Spenser we find the same term used: ‘To make one *minime* of thy poor handmayd’—*Faerie Queene*, VI, x, 38.

Ib. *Knot-grass* (*Polygonum aviculare*) is so-called from the joints of its stem. It was formerly believed that a decoction in which it had been infused, had the effect of hindering the growth of animals and stunting them. The other popular names of it are swine’s-cress, hog-weed, cumberfield, etc. It has small, dark-green leaves, a reddish stem, chuffy bracts, and out of these its reddish-white blossoms grow. In *The Coxcomb*, by Beaumont and Fletcher, we have Dorothy saying:

'We want a boy extremely for this function
Kept under for a year with milk and knot-grass.'

337. *Or thine.* Theobald conjectured *or*; but this the Cambridge editors reject, as 'a similar construction [to "of thine," which the Folio reads] occurs in the *Tempest*, II, i, 27: "Which, of he, or Adrian, for a good wager, first begins to crow"—*Cambridge Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 273.
353. *Jangling*—(1) prating, babbling, idle-talking; (2) wrangling. 'Jangelyng is when a man speketh to moche bifore folk, and clappeth like a mille, and taketh no keepe what he saith'—Chaucer's *The Parson's Tale*.
357. *Acheron* (from Greek *axos*, grief) is the river of sorrow which flows round the infernal regions. Its waters are muddy and bitter, and into it Phlegethon and Cocytus flow. Tasso speaks of '*Acheronte oscure*', in *Jerusalem Delivered*, ix, 59; and Milton calls it 'Sad *Acheron* of sorrow black and deep'—*Paradise Lost*, ii, 578.
379. *Night's swift dragons.* Nox, or Night, the daughter of Chaos, one of the oldest of the classical deities, was the husband of Erebus (Hebrew *ereb*, evening). She was represented as riding, covered with a black veil studded with stars, in a chariot, drawn by everwatchful dragons.
380. *Aurora's harbinger*—'the morning star,' called also Lucifer or Phosphorus, the bringer of light; the planet Venus, when seen in the morning before sunrise. Compare in Spenser:

'Bright as doth the morning star appear
Out of the east, with flaming locks bedight,
To tell the dawning day is drawing near'—*Faerie Queene*.

And Milton's later *Song on May Morning*:

'Now the bright morning star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the east, and leads with her
The flowery May.'

In a poetical miscellany, now rare, *The Phœnix' Nest*, etc., set forth by R. S. of the Inner Temple, gentleman, published in 1593, there appears a poem from the pen of Thomas Watson, author of the *Passionate Centurie of Love*, commencing with the following lines alluding to the mythologic fable :

'Aurora now beganne to rise againe
From watrie couch, and from old Tithon's side,
In hope to kisse upon Acteian plaine
Yong Cephalus; and through the golden glide,
On easterne coast, she cast so great a light
That Phœbus thought it time to make retire,' etc.

383. *Cross-roads.* Suicides, and malefactors who had been executed, were buried in cross-roads and in the beds of flowing streams.
387. *Consort*—from Latin *consors*, one who casts in his lot with others; to associate with. *Acts xvii*, 4.

389. *The Morning's love* is Cephalus, the Thessalian huntsman, husband of Procris, and the beloved of Aurora. ‘Whether Oberon meant to laugh at Tithonus, the old husband of Aurora, or sport like a forester with young Cephalus, the morning's love, is still matter of controversy’—CHARLES KNIGHT. See note on V, i, 194.
421. *Ho, ho! ho, ho!* The Rev. Robert Forby, in his *Vocabulary of Norfolk and Suffolk*, ‘has recorded an East-Anglian proverb, To laugh like Robin Goodfellow’—i.e. a long, loud, hearty horse-laugh; but he adds that ‘the deeds of the merry goblin have long been consigned to oblivion.’ In Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, vol. iii, No. xxiv, a ballad on Robin Goodfellow, attributed to Ben Jonson by Peck, is published, and this interjectional imitation of laughter forms the close of each stanza.
455. *That every man should take his own.* The ‘country proverb’ which Puck quotes is, perhaps, ‘The poor man shall have his mare again.’ In *Jyll of Brentford’s Testament*, by Robert Copeland, printed by his brother, William Copeland, before 1561, Hardysay, under the influence of ‘a pot of good ale,’ is represented as quoting it: ‘The poore *mare* will have his *man* agayne.’

ACT IV.—SCENE I.

2. *Amiable*—lovely, worthy to be beloved. See Ps. lxxxiv, 1.
12. *Thistle* (*Carduus*). A common wild plant of the order *Compositæ*, sub-order *Cynarocephale*, which bears a large flower, generally purple, but sometimes white or yellowish. It is in general regarded as a troublesome wayside weed, though one of its species (*Onopordon acanthium*), from an historical incident, has been accepted as the national emblem of Scotland, and the suggestor of its motto, ‘Wha daur meddle wi’ me?’ Its leaves are spinous, its seed-cups globose, its feathery plume purple, and its stem tall and branched.
21. *Cobweb*. It was Peasblossom (see line 7) who got the commission to scratch. This may have been a slip of Shakespeare’s, but it may have been intended as an indication of Bottom’s confusedness of mind.
30. *A bottle of hay*. It is intended here that the reading should be of such dreamy indistinctness that a struggle between the manly and the assinine nature, on the utterance of the word *bottle*, should be indicated by pronouncing *hay* almost as if it were *ale*; for the snatch of an old song which Bottom trolls out runs: ‘Good ale, sweet ale, hath no fellow.’

- 39, 40. *The woodbine . . . entwist.* Compare with this, as Gifford suggested, Ben Jonson's

‘Behold
How the blue bindweed doth itself infold
With honeysuckle, and both these entwine
Themselves with bryony and jessamine’

—*The Vision of Delight* (1637), 236-239.

70. *Dian's bud.* This, Steevens explains as ‘the bud of the *Agnus castus*,’ but the Rev. N. J. Halpin says: ‘On an older, if not a better authority, I maintain it to be “the bud of Diana's rose,” and that “Diana's rose” was one of the popular names by which [Queen] Elizabeth was known by her admiring subjects.’ In proof of this he quotes from *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, by Robert Greene, some lines, of which the following are the most important :

‘From forth the royal garden of a king,
Shall flourish out so rich and fair a *bud*,
Whose brightness shall deface proud Phœbus' flower.

Juno shall shut her gilliflowers up,
And Pallas' bay shall 'bash her brightest green;
Ceres' carnation in consort with those
Shall stoop and wonder at Diana's rose.’

After noting that Greene died in 1592, and that his drama was published in 1594, the ingenious expounder of *Oberon's Vision* gives as his conclusion that Shakespeare's ‘Dian's bud’ is the same as Greene's ‘Diana's rosebud,’ ‘that is to say, the figurative Queen Elizabeth’—*Oberon's Vision Illustrated* (1843), p. 13.

‘*Vitex Agnus castus* is one of the commonest shrubs in Greece, and was known of old by the Greek name *άγρος* [impressed with reverential awe], and in earlier writers by that of *λύτρος* [a willow-like tree, used for wreaths]. The name of *Agnus castus*, Pliny says, was given to it from the habit of the matrons of Athens to strew their beds with it during the festival of the Thesmophora [held in honour of Demeter], when the strictest chastity was enjoined. He mentions (xxiv, 38) two kinds—the larger, called the white, bearing a white blossom mixed with purple; the smaller, with a paler downy leaf and flower entirely purple’—C. Daubeny's *Trees and Shrubs of the Ancients*, p. 117.

94. *Compass*—encircle, go round, make the circuit of.
 109-124. ‘Even Titian never made a hunting-piece of a gusto so fresh and lusty, and so near the first ages of the world as this’—William Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, p. 93.
 109. *Cadmus*—son of Agenor and of Telephassa, husband of Hermione, and brother of Europa, the founder of Thebes, and the inventor of the Greek alphabet. In his search for his

sister Europa, by command of his father, he consulted the oracle at Delphi, and was ordered by the god to follow the cow, which led him from Phocis to Boeotia. There Cadmus slew the dragon, and, by the advice of Minerva, sowed the teeth of the monster, and thence there sprang armed men, the *Sparti*, who slew each other with the exception of five, who were the ancestors of the Thebans, and the progenitors of the Spartans. Shakespeare finely enters into the spirit of the antique mythology, hereby bringing together the two dragon-slayers in a hunting expedition, accompanied by the 'bouncing Amazon,' Hippolyta, in a land well known to Theseus.

110. *Crete*—the island of Candia, in the Mediterranean Sea, south of the Cyclades. It was, as fable had it, the birthplace of Jupiter and the kingdom of Minos. It was famous for its fertility and salubrity, its early civilisation and naval power. Its chief towns were Gnossus, Gortyna, and Cydonia. The inhabitants were famous for their archery, and, Epimenides, quoted by St Paul, said, 'always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.' Crete was plentifully wooded, and the chase was a favourite occupation of the people. It was at first settled by Cadmus and his fellow-emigrants; and Theseus is said, during his residence therein, to have learned those principles of legislation which he introduced into the government of Athens.

111. *Hounds of Sparta*. Virgil directs his country gentleman thus:

'Nec tibi cura canum fuerit postrema; sed una
Veloces Sparte catulos, acremque Molossum
Pasce sero pinqui.'

('Let not your care of dogs be last, with fattening whey aye feed,
At once swift *hounds of Sparta*, and of fierce Molossan breed.')
—*Georgics*, iii, 404, 405.

Among Actæon's dogs, Ovid mentions (*Metamorphoses*, iii):

'Gnossus, Ichnobates, Spartana gente Melampus'—208.

('Tracer, a Gnossian hound, and Blackfoot of Spartan breed.')

'Et patre Dictaeo, sed matri Laconide nati
Labros et Agriodos'—223, 224.

('Worrier and White-tooth,
Also bred from a Cretan dog, but by a Spartan bitch.')

117. *Flewed*—chapped. Shakespeare probably borrowed the word from 'great flewed,' by which Golding (1567) translated the *Labros* in the foregoing quotation, connecting that word, λάθης, which means *greedy*, with *labrosus*, having large hanging lips or chaps. Our word *flew*, the lateral, hanging part of a dog's upper lip, is said to be etymologically connected with the Dutch *slabbe*.

117. *Sanded*—freckled, spotted, speckled, variegated.
 119. *Dewlapped*—fleshy-throated, as it is explained in :

'Who would believe that there were mountaineers
Dewlapt like bulls, whose throats had hanging at them
 Wallets of flesh'—*The Tempest*, III, iii.

143. *Amazedly*—in a state of mental bewilderment. *Macbeth*, IV, i, 126.
150. *Without the peril*—beyond the danger to which offenders expose themselves. See : 'Without her power'—*Tempest*, V, i, 271; and 'Without our measure'—2 *Cor.* x, 13.
196. 'Bottom also awakes, and vainly essays to collect his sleep-wanderings. In doing this he parodies a text of Holy Writ, for which the poet has been accused of profanity. What he meant by it himself was quite the opposite. The quotation is made in a religious spirit, and for the purpose of suggestion. Shakespeare thereby intended to imply, that by the "changing" and "translating" of Bottom, he meant to shadow forth the manner in which we shall be transformed in the future life to which we are destined; but to have done this directly would have been undramatic and otherwise objectionable. He therefore does it indirectly, and under a thin veil of humour, so that while it is there for the benefit of those who will seek his meaning, it may not be obtruded on the attention of those who are not qualified for its reception'—*Shakespeare: His Inner Life*, by J. A. Heraud, p. 187.

SCENE II.

14. *A thing of naught*—worthless, bad. Anglo-Saxon *nāȝt*.
Isa. xli, 12.
18. *Bully*—good fellow, friend. See III, i, 7, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I, iii, 6, II, i, 225, and IV, v, 17.
24. *Courageous*—probably used for *encouraging*, to mean heart-enlivening.
34. *Preferred*—perhaps used for 'proffered,' sent in for acceptance. *Preferred* means (1) recommended for promotion—2 *Henry VI*, IV, vii, 77; (2) promoted—*King Lear*, I, i, 277. Bassanio quibbles on the double meaning—*Merchant of Venice*, II, ii, 134.

ACT V.—SCENE I.

Enter, etc. 'In the folios the stage direction is "Enter Theseus, Hippolita, Egeus, and his Lords," and the speeches, which properly belong to Philostrate as master of the revels

are assigned to Egeus, with the exception of that beginning, “No, my noble lord,” etc. [line 76]. In line 38 the quartos correctly read “Philostrate,” where the folios have “Egeus.” The confusion may have arisen, as Mr Grant White suggests, from the two parts having been originally played by the same actor—*Cambridge Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 274.

- 5, 6. *Apprehend . . . comprehends.* *Apprehend*, from the Latin *apprehendo*, literally means to take hold of, to grasp, and so to get a knowledge of. *Comprehend*, from *comprehendo*, to seize and bring within the embrace of the mind. ‘We apprehend many truths that we do not comprehend.’ We acquire a knowledge of much of which we cannot acquire much knowledge.

11. *Sees Helen's beauty . . . Egypt.* The Helen here referred to is the world-famous Grecian beauty, wife of Menelaus, who, being stolen by Paris, became the cause of the Trojan war. The phrase signifies, Sees a rare and excelling beauty in features dark as an Egyptian's or a gipsy's.

34. *After-supper*—a service of fruits and confections laid on the table after supper; a refection of a light nature offered after the more solid collation.

42. *Brief*—abstract, synopsis, catalogue.

- Ib. Rife.* The Folio 1632 reads *rife*, plentiful, in fashion. Modern texts give *ripe*, ready, prepared.

- 44-60. In the folios, Lysander is represented as reading this ‘brief,’ and Theseus as commenting upon it. The quartos assign the speech to Theseus alone. The former arrangement was probably an actor’s *business* innovation. Theobald reverted to the reading of the quartos.

44. *The battle with the Centaurs.* The Centaurs were a rude mountain-tribe dwelling about Mount Pelion in Thessaly. Hunting the bull on horseback was a national sport among the Thessalonians, who were famous riders. From this it may be that the fabulous idea of the Centaurs (bull-slayers), half-men, half-horses, arose. Homer and Hesiod do not speak of them as having this mingled power, though with reference to their savage natures, probably, they called them ‘wild beasts.’ Pindar, in the second *Pythian Ode*, 25-52, tells of the crime of Ixion and the birth of Centaur, and of the monstrous brood which the Magnesian mares bore him, ‘like both their parents, from their dams inheriting their lower parts, and their upper portions from their sire.’ In the pursuit of the Erymanthian boar, Hercules came to the Centaur Pholus, who had got from Bacchus a cask of fine wine. This the hero, against the wish of his host, opened; and the delicious smell of the vintage attracted the whole of the Centaurs, and excited their desire to become partakers of it so intensely that they besieged the grotto of Pholus,

clamouring for a share. Hercules routed them all, and then retired to the house of Cheiron, who had brought him up. By accident he wounded his friends Cheiron and Pholus mortally. This encounter is sometimes confounded with a fight between the Lapithæ and the Centaurs at the marriage-feast of Pirithous; and perhaps it was a poem on this topic which Theseus referred to as ready

‘To be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.’

47. *My kinsman Hercules.* ‘Theseus and Hercules were nearly related, being born of cousins-german; for Ethra, the mother of Theseus, was the daughter of Pitheus, and Alcmena of Lycidice; and Lycidice and Pitheus, brothers and sisters by Hippodamia and Pelops’—Dr Zachary Grey, *Notes on Shakespeare*, vol. i, p. 71.
49. *The Thracian singer*—Orpheus, the most celebrated of the poets who lived before Homer. He was the son of Æagrus and Calliope, and one of the Argonauts. The Thracian women, in revenge for his contempt of them—induced by his deep grief for the loss of Eurydice—took him to pieces in the excitement of their Bacchanalian orgies. The story of his death is told skilfully in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, xi, 1-145.
- 52-53. *The thrice-three muses . . . late deceased in beggary.* There could scarcely be a more distinct and definite reference made, we think, than is here done to Spenser’s *Tears of the Muses*, composed in 1589, and published in 1591 by William Ponsonby in a small quarto volume, entitled ‘*Complaints: containing Sundry Small Poems of the World’s Vanity [i.e., disappointingness].*’ The poem begins:

‘Rehearse to me, ye sacred nine,
The golden brood of great Apollo’s wit,
Those piteous sad plaints, and sorrowful sad tone,
Which late ye poured forth as ye did sit
Beside the silver springs of Helicon,
Making your music of heart-breaking moan.’

After a due enforcement, at some length, of the request, the poetic sisterhood, successively, proceed to ‘mourn the death of learning’ in their several departments. All have a tale of woe to relate concerning the decay and decease of the pursuits they favour, and great floods of sorrow are poured forth by them. In one passage Melpomene complains:

‘But I, that in true tragedies am skild,
The flowre of wit, find nought to busie me;’

and in another Thalia inquires:

‘Where be the sweete delights of learning’s treasure,
That wont with painted sock to beautifie

The painted theater?
 With sea-soned wit and go d y pica-asce graced
 By which man's life in his fairest image
 Was limned forth.
 And he, the man, whom Nature's self had made
 To mock herself, and Truth to imitate
 With kindly c roster under mimick shade,
 Our pleasant Wily.'

It has been held by many commentators that these passages refer to him who in this play has made 'the lightfoote fairies' live for ever for us; and we cannot doubt it, for no other writer then existed of whom such praises could be sung by a genius like Spenser's. In these lines we have a pleasing acknowledgment of Spenser's poem, and of the power and taste which it displayed. It has been conjectured that in these lines Shakespeare alludes to the death of Robert Greene, who 'deceased' in 1592 in a condition that might truly be called 'beggary.' As *falseness* of meaning is a characteristic of Shakespeare's writing, we see no reason for rejecting this conjecture. On the contrary, we think the poetic beauty of the lines is enhanced by the kindly sigh with which the poet refers to this 'complaint' of 'the thrice-three muses,' as almost prophetic of the fate of the contemporary who, more than any man then prominent, represented 'learning,' and was 'late deceased in beggary'—turning over, as it were, the compliment paid to himself to a rival, and hanging it like a remembrance-wreath upon his tomb. It is no objection to this hypothesis that Theseus remarks: 'This is some satire keen and critical;' for that is only given as a suppository inference or guess not stated as a fact. In this passage we see the great dramatist accepting a kindly-meant compliment from Spenser courteously, and then dropping a tear over the unfortunate compeer, who had entertained ill thoughts of him, in his large-hearted charity blotting out all malice and envy and evil-speaking from the record of his spirit. Greene's death obtained a publicity, in the noise of which Shakespeare's name and reputation became involved, and the author must have known that the utterance of these lines would recall the remembrance of Greene's taunt, and his protest to Chettle against it, and he kindly brings the nine muses to mourn for the decease of the learned Greene.

59. *Wondrous strange snow.* I have been kindly favoured by Dr C. M. Ingleby with the following excerpt from his *Note-book on Shakespeare's Text* on this passage: 'It has been thought credible that Shakespeare should have intended *wondrous strange snow* as an antithesis, like hot ice; and forasmuch as the verse is imperfect (unless *wondrous* be made a trisyllable, "wonderous"), *strange* has been often regarded as a misprint

for some word which is the reverse of cold or of white. Hamner proposed *scorching*, and Collier *seething*. The conjectures, which have never been received into the text of any edition, are: *Strong*, Moncke Mason; *strange black*, Capell; *swarthy*, W. S. Walker; *swarte*, Staunton; *black*, Upton; *staining*, Nicholson; and, as usual with him, S. Bailey offers the reader a choice of four substitutes—*raven*, *sable*, *azure*, *orange*. Of these perhaps Capell's is the preferable reading, since “wondrous strange” was a sort of proverbial term in Shakespeare's day. My own impression is that *tawny* (*tawnye*) is a more likely word to have got misprinted “strange,” having regard to the *liaison* of the “s” at the end of *wondrous*; thus *stawnye* and *strange* are much alike in MS., and *tawnye* gives a peculiarly fine rhythm, and also excellent sense, since it is the ordinary epithet applied to the soil when no snow is on it; e.g. “The ground is indeed *tawny*”—*Tempest*, II, i, 54; ‘We shall your *tawny* ground with your red blood discolour’—*Henry V*, III, vi, 170.

82, 83. *Never . . . tender it.* In Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) we have:

‘What the argument, or of what sort our sports
Are like to be this night, I not demand;
Nothing which duty and desire to please
Bears written on the forehead, comes amiss’—V, iii, 78-80.

91. *Cannot do*, etc. These two lines, Dr Abbott, *Shakespearian Grammar*, p. 419, proposes to amend and complete, thus:

‘And what poor duty cannot do *but would*,
Noble respect takes not in might but merit.’

108-117. It was a favourite joke with authors in Shakespeare's time to give a perfectly contrary sense to the clauses of a speech by different punctuation. Of this a famous example occurs in Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, the earliest English comedy extant. It was quoted in Dr Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reason, conteyning the Arte of Logike*, third edition (1533), as ‘an example of such doubtful writing’:

‘Sweete mistresse, where as I loue you nothing at all,
Regarding your substance and richesse chiefe of all,
For your personage, beaultie, demeanour and wit,
I commende me vnto you neuer a whit.
Sorie to heare report of your good welfare.
For (as I heare say) suche your conditions are,
That ye be worthie fauour of no liuing man,
To be abhorred of euery honest man.
To be taken for a woman enclined to vice.
Nothing at all to Virtue gyuing her due price.
Wherfore concerning mariage, ye are thought
Suche a fine Paragon, as nere honest man bought.
And nowe by these presentes I do you aduertise
That I am minded to marrie you in no wise.
For your goodes and substance, I coulde bee content’

To take you as ye are. If ye mynde to bee my wyfe,
 Ye shall be assured for the tyme of my lyfe,
 I will keepe ye ryght well, from good rayment and fare,
 Ye shall not be kepte but in sorowe and care.
 Ye shall in no wyse lyue at your owne libertie,
 Doe and say what ye lust, ye shall never please me,
 But when ye are mery, I will be all sadde,
 When ye are sory, I will be very gladde.
 When ye seeke your heartes ease, I will be vnkinde,
 At no tyme, in me shall ye muche gentenesse finde.
 But all things contrary to your will and minde,
 Shall be done: otherwise I wyll not be behynde
 To speake. And as for all them that woulde do you wrong
 I will so helpe and maintayne, ye shall not lyue long.
 Nor any foolish dolte, shall cumber you but I.
 I (who ere saie naie) wyll sticke by you, tyll I die.
 Thus good mistresse Custance, the lorde you sauе and kepe,
 From me Roister Doister, whether I wake or slepe.
 Who fauoureth you no lesse (ye may be bolde)
 Than this letter purporteth, which ye haue unfolde.'

Here is the correctly punctuated reading, which contains a meaning so different:

'Sweete mistresse, where as I loue you, nothing at all
 Regarding your richesse and substance: chiefe of all
 For your personage, beautie, demeanour and witte
 I commende me vnto you: Neuer a whitte
 Sory to heare reporte of your good welfare.
 For (as I heare say) suche your conditions are,
 That ye be worthie fauour: Of no liuing man
 To be abhorred: of euery honest man
 To be taken for a woman inclined to vice
 Nothing at all: to vertue giuing hir due price.
 Wherfore concerning mariage, ye are thought
 Suche a fine Paragon, as nere honest man bought.
 And nowe by these presents I doe you aduertise,
 That I am minded to marrie you: In no wyse
 For your goodes and substance: I can be content
 To take you as you are: yf ye will be my wife,
 Ye shall be assured for the tyme of my life,
 I wyll keepe you ryght well: from good rayment and fare,
 Ye shall not be kept: but in sorowe and care
 Ye shall in no wyse lyue: at your owne libertie,
 Doe and say what ye lust: ye shall never please me
 But when ye are merie: I will bee all sadde
 When ye are sorie: I wyll be very gladde
 When ye seeke your heartes ease: I will be vnkinde
 At no tyme: in me shall ye muche gentenesse finde.
 But all things contrary to your will and minde
 Shall be done otherwise: I wyll not be behynde
 To speake: And as for all they that woulde do you wrong
 (I wyll so helpe and maintayne ye) shall not lyue long.
 Nor any foolish dolte shall cumber you, but I,
 I, who ere say nay, wyll sticke by you tyll I die.
 Thus good mistresse Custance, the lorde you sauе and kepe,
 From me Roister Doister, whether I wake or slepe,
 Who fauoureth you no lesse (ye may be bolde),
 Than this letter purporteth, which ye haue vnfolde.'

Re-issued in Arber's reprints, Grosart's *Fuller's Worthies' Library*, and Hazlitt's *Dodsley's Old Plays*, vol. iii.

113. *Minding*—intending, proposing.

115. *Repent*—regret, sorrow for. See *Merchant of Venice*:

‘Repent but you, that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt’—IV, i, 274, 275.

134, 135. *This man . . . moonshine*. See *Tempest*, II, ii, 126-128.

138. *Hight* (German *heissen*, Gothic *haitan*, Old English *hátan*, to call)—named. *Love's Labour's Lost*, I, i, 171.

165. *Partition*—used as a synonym for ‘wall,’ as in the phrase: ‘The middle wall of partition’—*Eph.* ii, 14.

171. *Fear*. Compare *Julius Cæsar*, II, i, 190; *Gen.* xxxi, 42, 53; *Prov.* i, 26, 27.

192, 193. *Limander . . . Helen*. These are clownish blunders for ‘Hero’ and ‘Leander,’ the lovers of Sestos and Abydos, ‘whose tragedy divine Musæus sung,’ according to the belief of the scholars of Shakespeare’s time, though that is doubted now. Marlow’s paraphrase of the Greek of [the pseudo?] Musæus, left unfinished at his death, 1st June 1593, was completed by George Chapman, and published by Edward Blunt in 1598. It is probable, however, that Shakespeare had seen the story in a native dress before Marlow’s version was published; for Abraham Fleming, in his translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* (1589), states in a marginal note that ‘a dozen years ago’ (1577) he had issued an English version of ‘a *Historie of Leander and Hero*,’ in which title we have the order of the names employed here.

194. *Shafalus to Procrus*. These are also blunders for ‘Cephalus’ and ‘Procris.’ The legend of these ‘lovers true’ is contained in varying forms in the 25th of the *Fragments* of Pherecydes of Leros, in the *Bibliotheca* of Apollodorus of Athens, iii, 15, and in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, vii, 469-865. Cephalus, son of Deion, the son of Æolus, was beloved by Aurora (Eos), but, having rejected her advances from love to his wife Procris, eldest daughter of Erechtheus, he was advised by the goddess of the morning to test his wife’s fidelity. Aurora changed him in outward appearance, and sent him with costly presents to Procris to win her love. She gave signs of yielding, and then, resuming his own shape, he rebuked her for her inconstancy. She ran away; Diana gave her a dog and a spear which never missed their aim, and she, disguised as a youth, returned to Cephalus. He promised to love the youth always on getting the dog and the spear. She, in her turn, revealed herself, and they were reconciled. Procris, however, still doubted that he loved Aurora, and went out to watch him. While doing so once, she made a rustling in the thicket. He, fancying that there was a wild beast there, threw the unerring spear, and slew his beloved wife. This is a sort of companion story to *Hero and Leander*.

202. *The mural down*, etc. ‘The observation of Mr Collier, that “of *mural*, as a substantive, no instance has been adduced,” is of no weight; for the same objection might be made to several other words peculiar to Shakespeare. We have *mure* for *wall* in *2 Henry IV*, IV, iv, 119. That it was in use, however, can hardly be doubted; for Evelyn, in his *Kaleendarium Hortense*, speaks of “mural fruit-trees.” There may have been an equivoque intended [between *mural* and *moral*, which the old copies print]. The poet delights in such equivoques’—S. W. SINGER.

234. *The man in the moon*. The popular superstition regarding ‘the man in the moon’ seems to have originated in an endeavour to improve, interpret, or realise Scripture. In the fifteenth chapter of the book of *Numbers* (32-36) an account is given of ‘a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day,’ who was brought ‘unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.’ He was put in ward, and was thereafter stoned with stones till he died. As an after-doom, the choice was given him of burning in the sun or freezing in the moon. Preferring the latter, he may now be always seen at full moon, seated with a bundle of sticks upon his back. The earliest reference, perhaps, to this myth is contained in those two lines of the *De Naturis Rerum* of Alexander Neckham—a poet and philosopher, who was born on the same night as Richard Cœur-de-Lion:

‘Rusticus in Luna, quem sarcina depresit una
Monstrat per spinas nulli professe rapinas.’

(‘The Rustic in the Moon, whom a fardle weigheth down,
Through his sticks this truth reveals, no one profits if he steals.’)

Dante speaks of him (*Paradiso*, ii, 51, and *Purgatorio*, xx, 126) as Cain, who, in ‘the fabulous tale,’ was said to have proposed to offer to God in sacrifice thorns, the most worthless product of the earth. Others say he is Isaac carrying the bundle of sticks for his own sacrifice. Some regard him as Endymion. Caliban, in the *Tempest*, II, ii, represents himself as familiar with the legend, of which there are several variations, which ‘may be briefly summed up thus: A man is located in the moon; he is a thief or Sabbath-breaker; he has a pole over his shoulders, from which is suspended a bundle of sticks or thorns. In some places a woman is supposed to accompany him, and she has with her a butter-tub; in other localities she is replaced by a dog’—*Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, by S. Baring-Gould, M.A., p. 187. See also Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie*, p. 412. In 1591, Joan Broome had license granted for the printing of *Endimion; or, The Man in the Moon*, by John Lylly.

273. *Thrum*—Icelandic *thraum*, German *trass*, an end or fragment.

Thrum is the name of the fringe of thread by which a weaver's web was fastened to the loom; so that to cut thread and thrum was to bring the web to an end by making it impossible to proceed any further with it.

276. *Go near*—be within a little of. See *Tempest*, II, ii, 17.
 294. *Die . . . ace.* The first pun is on *die*, to expire, as used by Bottom, and *die*, a cube, spotted with dots from one to six, used in gaming; and *ace*, the die having the lowest mark, one, from *as*, that piece of Roman money which was the *unit* in computation, and *ass*, used as a synonym for 'stupid fellow.'
 320. *Sisters three*—the Fates—Clotho (*Spinner*), Lachesis (*Allotter*), and Atropos (*Unchangeable*)—daughters of Night, who overrule the destinies of men. See *Merchant of Venice*, II, ii, 66.
 335. *Bergomask dance*—a rustic dance, similar to that engaged in at the country fairs in Bergomasco, a district in Italy, whose antics were imitated by many for amusement. Shakespeare seems to agree with Sir John Davies in thinking that

'Theseus to [o], his woodland slaves among,
Used dancing as the finest policie
To plant religion and society'—*Orchestra*, lxxix, 5-7 (1596).

343. *A dance of clowns.* In Ben Jonson's *Love's Welcome*, a masque (1634), we have also 'a dance of mechanics,' in which Chisel, the carver; Dresser, the plumber; Quarrel, the glazier; and Fret, the plasterer, figure among others.

SCENE II. -

14. *Hecate.* Shakespeare (in all cases except *I Henry VI*, III, ii, 64), as well as Ben Jonson, Milton, etc., uses this as a dis-syllable. *Mucbeth*, II, i, 52, III, ii, 41, III, v, 1, etc.
 21. *Through this house give.* R. G. White suggests *though*, and Daniel Wilson, LL.D., 'Through the housewives,' etc.
 31-53. *Now until*, etc. These lines are called '*The Song*' in the Folio, and are printed in italics. In the quartos they are given to Oberon. Dr Johnson reverted to the quarto reading. 'But where then'—he supposes some one to ask—is the song? I am afraid,' he replies, 'it is gone after many other things of greater value. The truth is that two songs are lost. The series of the scene is this: After the speech of Puck, Oberon enters, and calls his fairies to a song, which song is apparently wanting in all the copies. Next Titania leads another song, which is indeed lost like the former, though the editors have endeavoured to find it. Then Oberon dismisses his fairies to the despatch of the ceremonies. The songs, I suppose, were lost, because they were not inserted

in the 'players' parts, from which the drama was printed;' or perhaps the actors were purposely left free to sing any favourite song of their own, or any popular verses of the day. Dr Daniel Wilson of Toronto suggests that '*the Song*' was 'set to music with its various parts apportioned to different fairy singers; ' that Oberon and Titania probably sang 31-44 as a duet, 'the fairy chorus taking up alternate lines, repeating and singing in parts; ' and that 'the verse would be arranged in accordance with the exigencies of the music, and, in all probability, transcribed therefrom, with no very critical attention to the order of the lines.' He proposes to read:

'Through the palace with sweet peace,
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
With the field-dew consecrate:
And the owners of it blest,
Ever shall in safety rest.'

See *Caliban: The Missing Link*, pp. 258-260.

46-53. *Every fairy, etc.* See also *Merry Wives of Windsor*:

'About, about:
Search Windsor castle, elves, within and out;
Strew good luck, ouphes, on every sacred room;
That it may stand till the perpetual doom,
In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
Worthy the owner, and the owner it'—V, v, 59-64.

49, 50. 'The difficulty in these two lines is at once removed by transposing them, as was suggested by C. R. W., a correspondent in the *Illustrated London News*'—*Cambridge Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 275.

54. *The serpent's tongue*—hissing; the sound made by a serpent.

68. *Give me your hands, if we be friends*—that is, applaud our play.

'There can be little doubt that this was heartily done; for in this play the poet has made this most perishable part of the mind's creation [a dream] equal to the most enduring; he has so intertwined the elfins with human sympathies, and linked them by so many delightful associations with the productions of nature, that they are as real to the mind's eye as their green magical circles are to the outer sense.' We cannot, perhaps, conclude our notes better than by using the foregoing words, addressed to Charles Lamb by Thomas Hood, in the preface to his *Plea for the Midsummer Fairies*, a poem in which he endeavours 'to celebrate, by an allegory, that immortality which Shakespeare has conferred on the fairy mythology by his *Midsummer Night's Dream*.'

'Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream'

—Milton's *L'Allegro*, 129, 130.

A P P E N D I X.

OBERON'S VISION—(Act II, Sc. II, 89-110).

THE sweet allegory which this famous passage contains has been very frequently interpreted by Shakespearian commentators as a reference to the life-experience of the writer's own times. 'No one doubts,' as Thomas Kenny says, 'that these verses, which celebrate the happy escape of the "fair vestal throned by the west," contain a compliment—the most exquisite compliment ever offered by genius at the shrine of royal vanity—to the maidenly pretensions of Queen Elizabeth.' Of the interpretations which refer the passage to actual history, the most remarkable are those of Bishop Warburton, James Boaden, and the Rev. N. J. Halpin; but as Mr Halpin incorporates and improves that of Mr Boaden in almost all essential points, it will be enough to put the reader in possession of the explanations suggested by Warburton and Halpin in as brief a form as possible. The following is a statement of the bishop's original theory:

'89, 90.—The first thing observable on these words is, that the action of the *mermaid* is laid in the same time and place with *Cupid's* attack upon the *vestal*. By the *vestal*, every one knows, is meant Queen *Elizabeth*. It is very natural and reasonable, then, to think that the *mermaid* stands for some eminent personage of her time; and if so, the allegorical covering, in which there is a mixture of satire and panegyric, will lead us to conclude that this person was one of whom it had been inconvenient for the author to speak openly, either in praise or dispraise. All this agrees with *Mary, Queen of Scots*, and with no other. Queen Elizabeth could not bear to hear her commended; and her successor would not forgive her satirist. But the poet has so well marked out every distinguished circumstance of her life and character in this beautiful allegory, as will leave no doubt about his secret meaning. She is called a *mermaid*, (1) to denote her reign over a kingdom situate in the sea; and (2) her beauty and intemperate lust:

"Ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in pisces mulier formosa superne;"

for, as Elizabeth, for her chastity, is called a *vestal*, this unfortunate lady, on a contrary account, is called a *mermaid*; (3) an ancient story may be supposed to be here alluded to; the Emperor Julian tells us (*Epistle 41*), that the Sirens (which with all modern poets are *mermaids*) contended for precedence with the Muses, who, overcoming them, took away their wings. The quarrels between *Mary* and *Elizabeth* had the same cause and the same issue.

'91.—This evidently marks out that distinguishing circumstance of *Mary's* fortune, her marriage with the Dauphin of France, son of Henry II.

'92.—This alludes to her great abilities of genius and learning, which rendered her the most accomplished princess of her age. The French writers tell us that, while she was in that court, she pronounced a Latin oration in the great hall of the *Louvre*, with so much grace and elegance as filled the whole court with admiration.

'93.—By the *rude sea* is meant Scotland, encircled with the ocean, which rose up in arms against the regent, while she was in France. But her return home presently quieted those disorders; and had not her strange ill-conduct afterwards more violently inflamed them, she might have passed her whole life in peace. There is the greater justness and beauty in this image, as the vulgar opinion is that the *mermaid* always sings in storms.

'94, 95.—Thus concludes the description with that remarkable circumstance in this unhappy lady's fate, the destruction she brought upon several of the *English* nobility, whom she drew in to support her cause. This, in the boldest expression of the sublime, the poet images by "*certain stars shooting madly from their spheres*;" by which he meant the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, who fell in her quarrel, and principally the great Duke of *Norfolk*, whose projected marriage with her was attended with such fatal consequences. Here again the reader may observe a peculiar justness in the imagery; the vulgar opinion being that the *mermaid* allured men to destruction by her songs. To which opinion *Shakespeare* alludes in his *Comedy of Errors*:

"O train me not, sweet *mermaid*, with thy note,
To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears."

On the whole, it is the noblest and justest allegory that ever was written. The laying it in *fairyland*, and out of nature, is in the character of the speaker; and on these occasions *Shakespeare* always excels himself. He is borne away by the magic of his enthusiasm, and hurries his reader along with him into those ancient regions of poetry by that power of verse which we may well fancy to be like what "olim Fauni vatesque canebat."

'98.—Surely this presents us with a very unclassical image. In ancient books and monuments we never see Cupid armed with more than his bows and arrows; and with these we find him furnished in all humours. These, too, are the only arms he had occasion for in the

present action—a more illustrious one than any his friends the classic poets ever employed him in. I would therefore read *Cupid ALARMED*. The change I make is so small, and the beauty it gives the thought is so great, that I think we are not to hesitate upon it ; for how great an addition is it to the compliment on the virgin-queen's celibacy, that it *alarmed* the power of Love ! As if his empire was in danger when the *imperial votress* had declared herself for a single life, so great an influence would her example have amongst her sex. Queen Elizabeth could not but be pleased with the delicacy of this compliment.

'99-105.—A compliment to Queen Elizabeth.

'109.—This is as fine a metamorphosis as any *Ovid*, with a much better moral, intimating that irregular love has only power when people are idle.'

Of the Rev. N. J. Halpin's theory, this is his own most concise statement, forming an interpretive paraphrase of the passage :

'Oberon. Come hither, Puck. You doubtless remember when once upon a time, sitting together on a rising ground, or bray (brae), by the side of a piece of water, we saw what to us appeared (though to others it might have worn a different semblance) a mermaid sitting on a dolphin's back, and singing so sweetly to the accompaniment of a band of music placed inside of the artificial dolphin, that one could very well imagine the waves of the mimic sea before us would, had they been ruffled, have calmed and settled themselves down to listen to her melody ; and, at the same time, there was a flight of artificial fireworks, resembling stars, which plunged very strangely out of their natural element down into the water, and after remaining there awhile, rose again into the air, as if wishing to hear once more the sea-maid's music.

'Puck. I remember such things to have been exhibited amongst the pageantry at Kenilworth Castle, during the princely pleasures given on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1575.

'Oberon. You are right. Well, at that very time and place, I (and perhaps a few others of the choicer spirits) could discern a circumstance that was imperceptible to you (and to the meaner company of guests and visitants) ; in fact, I saw, wavering in his passion between (Cynthia, or) Queen Elizabeth, and (Tellus, or) the Lady Douglas, Countess of Sheffield, (Endymion, or) the Earl of Leicester [either alarmed at the progress of his rival, the Duke of Alençon, with the queen,* or], all-armed in the magnificence of his preparations for storming the heart of his royal mistress. He made a pre-determined and a well-directed effort for the hand of Elizabeth, the virgin Queen of England ; and presumptuously made such love to her, rash under all the circumstances, as if he fancied that neither she nor any woman in the world could resist his suit ; but it was evident to me (and to the rest of the *initiated*) that the ardent Leicester's desperate venture was lost in the pride, prudery, and

* If the reading of Warburton's [*alarmed*] be right.

jealousy of power, which invariably swayed the tide of Elizabeth's passions ; and the virgin-queen finally departed from Kenilworth Castle unshackled with a matrimonial engagement, and as heart-whole as ever. And yet (continues Oberon), curious to observe the collateral issues of this amorous preparation, I watched (whatever others may have done) and discovered the person on whom Leicester's irregular passion was secretly fixed ; it was fixed upon Lettice, at that time the wife of Walter, Earl of Essex, an Englishwoman of rank inferior to the object of his great ambition, who, previous to the unhappy attachment, was not only pure and innocent in conduct, but unblemished also in reputation ; after which she became not only deeply inflamed with a criminal passion, and still more deeply (perhaps) stained with a husband's blood, but the object also of shame and obloquy. Those, however, who pity her weakness, and compassionate her misery, still offer a feeble apology for her conduct, by calling it the result of her husband's voluntary absence, of the waste of affections naturally tender and fond, and of the idleness of a heart that might have been faithful if busied with honest duties, and filled with domestic love. You cannot mistake after all I have said—go—fetch me that flower.'

These interesting and ingenious endeavours to discover the hidden meaning of this passage have led to a great deal of writing on these few lines. Ritson combated Warburton's views with controversial heat and acumen. But perhaps the best observations on them which we can lay before the reader in short space, are those of the Rev. Joseph Hunter and of W. W. Lloyd.

'All agree,' says Mr Hunter, 'that Queen Elizabeth is figured by "the fair vestal throned by the west;" indeed on this there can be no dispute. The material question is whether, by "the mermaid on a dolphin's back," is meant, as Warburton contends, the Queen of Scots, and by the stars which "shot madly from their spheres," such persons as the Duke of Norfolk and the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, who fell from their allegiance out of regard for her ; or whether these are no portions of the allegory at all, but things which had a real existence, pageants in the shows at Kenilworth, on the queen's visit to the Earl of Leicester in 1575, and are here only accessory and ornamental, the other characters figured being the Earl of Leicester by Cupid, and the lady (Mr Boaden supposing one, and Mr Halpin another of the wives of Leicester) who was the wife of the earl by the "little western flower." . . . I deem it a point fatal to the supposition, that any wife of Leicester is figured by the "little western flower," that the allegory must be regarded, according to all just rules, as ending before the flower is introduced. This flower was a real flower, about to perform a conspicuous part in the drama, and the allegory is written expressly to give a dignity to the flower ; it is the splendour of preparation intended to fix attention on the flower, whose peculiar virtues were to be the means of effecting some of the most important purposes of

the drama. . . . There is not, indeed, a circumstance about the mermaid to which we do not find something correspondent in the Scottish queen. Now proceed to the other half of the allegory. "That very time," etc.* These words are most important. At the very time when the Duke of Norfolk was aspiring to the hand of the Queen of Scots, and so shooting from his sphere, the Queen of England was herself strongly solicited to marry. . . . The suitor to Queen Elizabeth was of course the Duke of Anjou. At the very time when at the sea-maid's music certain stars shot from their spheres, the strong dart aimed by Cupid [Love] against Elizabeth fell innocuous, and she passed on "in maiden meditation, fancy-free." The allegory ends here.[†]

'There can, it seems to me,' remarks W. W. Lloyd, 'be ultimately no dispute that this figurative picture expresses, as Warburton supposed, a contrast between Elizabeth and Mary, Queen of Scots. The contrast lies between the maiden meditation of "a fair vestal throned by the west," a soul self-surveying and abstracted, and an alluring and charming sorceress, drawing down the very lights from the firmament—between modest silence and coquettish, if not meretricious, song. . . . There is nothing poetically incongruous in the personification of Mary, including her life as Dauphiness, as newly-arrived Queen of Scots, as seducer, in captivity, of infatuated English lords; and we shall only lapse from poetry to prose, if we endeavour to connect the pondering of Elizabeth with the very time of any particular offer of her many suitors.'[‡]

Notwithstanding the pertinency of the facts adduced in the foregoing quotations, the learned Ulrici says: 'I am bold enough with Delius, not only at once to deny the allegorical significance of these lines, but to maintain that such a frosty and forced allegory might possibly suit the style of J. Lilly (from whose *Endymion* Halpin has borrowed it, and arranged it to suit the above passage), and that, for this very reason, it is thoroughly un-Shakespearian.'[§]

* 'My interpretation of Oberon's remark, "That very time I saw, but thou couldst not," is to this effect: Shakespeare is treating Puck for the moment as a personification of his own boyhood. "*Thou rememberest* the rare vision we saw at the "princely pleasures" at Kenilworth?" "I remember," replies Puck. So that he was then present and saw the sights, and all the outer realities of the pageant. But the boy of eleven could not see what Oberon saw, the matrimonial mysteries of Leicester; the lofty aim of the earl at a royal prize, and the secret intrigue then pursued by him and the Countess of Essex. Whereupon the fairy king unfolds, in allegory, what he before saw in vision, and clothes the naked skeleton of fact in the very bloom of beauty, with touches and tints delicate as those of spring embroidering a grave with flowers'—Gerald Massey's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 477.

[†] *New Illustrations of Shakespeare*, i, pp. 291-295.

[‡] *Essays on Shakespeare* (fifty copies issued privately), sig. C, a.

[§] *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, translated by L. Dora Schmitz, ii, p. 83.

QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION.

A C T I.

- Who were about to be married at the opening of this play ?
Who was ordered to get up amusements for the wedding ?
What complaint did Egeus make to Theseus ?
What consequences did Theseus point out to Hermia as likely to result from her disobedience ?
What is said to have been the law of Athens as to daughters ?
What did Hermia say in her own behalf ?
Who were the competitors for Hermia's hand ?
How did they each advocate their rights ?
What arrangement did Lysander and Hermia make to evade compliance with the law ?
To whom had Hermia's unacceptable wooer formerly made love ?
What confidence did Hermia repose in Helena ?
What resolution did Helena come to regarding what she had heard ?
Who were anxious to share in the merriment of Theseus's wedding-day ?
How did they propose to do so ?
What play did they design to perform in ?
How were the parts arranged, or the characters distributed ?
What objections were raised and overruled ?
What was at last agreed on ?
Tell what you know of Theseus, Bottom, Quince, Egeus, Lysander, Demetrius, Hippolyta, Hermia, Helena.
Give a brief description of Athens.
Quote six passages of Scripture illustrative of portions of this act.
Explain 'lingers,' 'dowager,' 'pert,' 'triumph,' 'gauds,' 'livery,' 'spleen,' 'catching,' 'translated,' 'quantity,' 'form,' 'scrip,' 'scroll,' 'condole,' 'properties.'
What is meant by the phrases 'earthlier-happy,' 'virgin-patent,' 'Fancy's followers,' 'grow on to a point,' 'tear a cat,' 'make all spit,' 'hold or cut bowstrings ?'
Quote and explain any law-phrases employed in this act.
Describe the May 'observances.'

What classical allusions occur in Act I?

Quote passages from other poets illustrative of portions of Act I.

What remarks have been made concerning the moon during the 'four days' spoken of at the beginning of this play?

Quote a line which might have had a reference to the court-life of Elizabeth's time, and give examples of a similar idea being common then.

Explain any six grammatical difficulties in Act I.

Quote any various readings in Act I.

Quote any six personifications used in this act.

Give three examples of poetic description from it.

Quote four examples of terse proverb-like expressions.

A C T I I.

What fairy characters take part in Act II?

Describe them and their usual doings.

What disagreement had arisen between Oberon and Titania?

What had been the results to 'human mortals'?

How did Oberon intend to gain his end?

Of what flower did he desire the juice?

What remarkable thing had happened to that flower?

What singular property did it thereby acquire?

What 'lovers' quarrel' did Oberon learn about?

How did he propose to bring it to an end?

Did he accomplish his aim with Titania?

How did Puck's commission fail of success?

What mistake arose on that account?

What opinions have been formed concerning Oberon's vision?

What inferences about Shakespeare's youth have been drawn from that vision?

Describe Puck or Robin Goodfellow.

Tell what you know of Perigenia, *Ægle*, Ariadne, Antiope.

Explain any classical allusions which occur in Act II.

What references are made in Act II to old English games and sports?

Describe the weather which had resulted from the quarrel of Oberon and Titania.

What endeavours have been made to determine the date of this play in reliance on these references?

A C T I I I.

What arrangements for rehearsal did Bottom and his company make?

Describe the rehearsal.

Who was spectator of part of their proceedings?

What merry prank did he play on Bottom?

- What effect did this produce among his fellows ?
 How did it affect Titania ?
 How did Bottom and the fairies get on ?
 How did Puck describe his doings, and their results—(1) on the actors, (2) on the queen of the fairies ?
 How did the Greek lovers act under the influences of Puck's mistake ?
 How was the mistake discovered ?
 What excuse did Puck offer to Oberon for his mistake ?
 What plan was adopted to set matters to rights ?
 How did the quarrel between Hermia and Helena proceed ?
 How were the would-be combatants dealt with ?
 Explain the names of Titania's fairy attendants.
 Describe the fruits which Titania mentions.
 Quote Helena's description of early friendship.
 Explain 'Aurora's harbinger,' 'the morning's love,' 'Neptune,' 'Acheron,' 'tawny Tartar,' 'guest-wise,' 'double-tongue.'
 Quote any proverbial phrases used in Act III.
 Quote any passages of Shakespeare's other plays illustrative of passages in this one.

A C T I V.

- In what way did Bottom receive the civilities of the fairies ?
 On what grounds did Oberon feel pity for his queen ?
 How was her restoration brought about ?
 What impression did she retain of her entranced state ?
 Describe the hunting-train of Theseus.
 Give Hippolyta's impressions of a former hunting-expedition.
 Quote the description of Theseus's hounds.
 With what passages of the classics does this description agree ?
 Explain any other classical allusions occurring in Act IV.
 How were the Greek lovers awakened ?
 How did they feel on being interviewed in this manner ?
 What proposal did Theseus make to them ?
 What did Bottom propose to have done as a memorial of his dream ?
 Describe Bottom's adventure with the fairies.
 What effect had Bottom's translation on the prospects of his fellows ?
 What effect had his recovery on them ?
 Who was the bard of the company, and who the *star* ?
 What was 'Dian's bud,' what Cupid's flower ?
 Explain 'St Valentine's day.'
 Explain 'neif,' 'nowl,' 'flewed,' 'sanded,' 'latched,' 'misprised,' 'aby,' 'flout,' 'preferred.'
 What is the meaning of 'without the peril,' 'a crew of patches,' 'antipodes,' 'krat-grass,' 'princess of pure white,' 'Ethiop' ?

Quote six beautiful passages from this act.
What passages of Scripture may be referred to in this act?

ACT V.

What impression did the tale of the lovers make on Theseus and Hippolyta?

How did the lovers' quarrel end at last?

What amusements were proffered and preferred for the wedding festivities?

Give a brief notice of each of the subjects for pastime brought forward.

Which was chosen, and how was it described?

What induced Theseus to accept it?

Give an account of the entertainment afforded by the rude mechanics.

What part did the fairies take in the wedding solemnities?

What legendary love-tales of the ancients are referred to in this act?

To which of his contemporaries has Shakespeare been supposed to allude in this act?

What lesson does this act afford on the necessity of attending to punctuation?

What explanations have been given of 'wondrous strange snow?'

Explain 'apprehend,' 'comprehend,' 'brief,' 'repent,' 'minding,' 'partition,' 'fear,' and 'go near.'

What is meant by 'the sisters three,' 'the serpent's tongue,' and a 'Bergomask dance?'

What 'curious myth' is noticed in Act V?

What reasons are afforded in this act for thinking highly of Theseus?

Quote from this act a famous description of poetry.

Quote four passages which have become proverbial.

Quote any lines which appear to refer to dramatic poetry.

Explain any classical, scriptural, or contemporary allusions this act contains.

Describe the audience at the play.

Quote any passages from other poets illustrative of passages from Act V.

How has the last scene been explained?

GENERAL QUESTIONS.

What superstitions were formerly entertained about Midsummer Eve?

From what sources does the plot of this play seem to be derived?
Give details of the parts separately.

What ideas were prevalent in Shakespeare's time concerning fairies?

To what date may the composition of this play be assigned?

What dates have been assigned to this play? State the reasons for each.

Show the appropriateness of the title of this play.

What tradition of Shakespeare's life may be considered as helping us to understand the origin of this play?

Are there any passages in Shakespeare's other dramas which interlink them with this one?

What explanations have been given of the connections of the parts of the plot?

Narrate the plot (1) briefly; (2) on a more enlarged scale with illustrative quotations.

Give an account of the early editions of this play.

What do we learn regarding May-day in this play?

Write a critical estimate of any of (1) the classical characters; (2) the fairy characters; (3) the mechanic characters.

Write out the story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Give an outline of the origin, progress, consequences, and close of the fairy sovereigns' quarrel.

Recount the love difficulties of Hermia.

Quote from the play five fine descriptive passages.

Compose an essay on this play (1) as if seen in a dream; (2) as if seen performed on the stage; (3) as a story told by Theseus, Hippolyta, Bottom, or Puck.

Write a critical notice of the play (1) as a fairy romance, (2) as a dream; and give an estimate of the poetical power displayed in it.

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